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DRAMAS.

VOL. II.

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DRAMAS,

BY

JOANNA BAILLIE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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BIBLIOTHECA·BODLEIANA·

TO THE READER.

THAT the largeness of our two regular, long-established Theatres, so unfavourable for seeing and hearing clearly and accurately, have changed in a great measure the character of the pieces generally exhibited within their walls, is a fact on which it would be useless now to dwell. How far the smaller Theatres of later establishment, some of which are of a proper size for the production of plays that depend for success on being thoroughly understood by the audience, will in time introduce a better state of things, it would be hazardous for any one to conjecture. At present, however, from various circumstances, from restrictions, from customs, from acquired tastes, &c. the prospect is not encouraging. But the cause that more, perhaps, than any other depresses the moral and rational effects of the Modern Stage, is an opinion entertained by many grave and excellent people, that dramatic exhibition is unfriendly to the principles and spirit of Christianity.

This deserves to be more seriously examined, because it prevails amongst a most respectable

class of the community, many of whom are possessed of good understanding, of learning and imagination, and cannot, without a great breach of charity, be supposed to be actuated by worldliness or hypocrisy. — It is in the nature of man to delight in representations of passion and character. Children, savages, learned and unlearned of every nation, have with more avidity received instruction in this form than in any other, whether offered to them as a mimic show before their eyes, or a supposed story, enlivened by dialogue and addressed to the imagination alone. The blessed Founder of our religion, who knew what was in man, did not contradict nor thwart this propensity of our nature, but, with that sweetness and graciousness which peculiarly belonged to his divine character, made use of it for the instruction of the multitude, as his incomparable parables so beautifully testify. The sins and faults which he reproved were not those that are allied to fancy and imagination, the active assistants of all intellectual improvement, but worldliness, uncharitableness, selfish luxury, spiritual pride, and hypocrisy. In those days, the representation of Greek dramas prevailed in large cities through the whole Roman empire; yet the Apostles only forbade their converts to feast in the temples

of idols, and on sacrifices offered to idols, and trusted that the general gentleness and humanity enjoined on them as followers of their blessed Master, would keep them away from spectacles of cruelty and blood. We cannot, therefore, it appears to me, allege that dramatic representations are contrary either to the precepts or spirit of the Christian religion.

But probably it is not a real conviction, that going to a theatre is in itself unchristian or wrong, which keeps such persons away, but a conscientious persuasion that it ought to be discountenanced, because of the bad tendency of the pieces exhibited there, before the eyes of the innocent and susceptible; and because of the disorderly and worthless company who frequent playhouses, and gather about their passages and neighbourhood. These indeed are weighty and plausible reasons, that deserve to be thoroughly examined. And how far the absence of the grave and moral part of society from such places tends to remedy or increase the evils apprehended, ought also to be seriously considered. We shall begin, then, with the bad tendency of the pieces exhibited.

A manager must suit his plays to the character of the most influential part of his au-

dience. The crowd in the gallery and pit can be very well entertained with a piece that has neither coarseness nor immorality in it; but the more refined and better informed, who generally occupy the boxes, and occasionally the pit, cannot be pleased with one in which there is any thing immoral or indecorous. But, if the refined and well-informed stay away, there is nothing, then, to be taken into the account but how to please such auditors as commonly fill the pit and galleries, and the boxes will very soon be occupied by company, somewhat richer, indeed, but not more scrupulous or intelligent than the others. Now, supposing matters to have come to this pass, what kind of entertainment will be provided for them? Scurrility and broad satire is more easily procured than wit; and delineations of low profligacy require less skill than those of the habits and characters of higher or more virtuous society. Will a manager, then, be at pains to provide delicate fare for those who are as well satisfied with garbage? This is surely not to be expected; and in as far as moral or intellectual improvement has been or may be superseded by intellectual debasement, occasioned by such well-meaning absentees from our Theatres, so far does their absenting themselves do mischief.

Let us next examine the other reason, viz. the disorderly and worthless people who frequent playhouses, and gather about their passages and neighbourhood. Young women of respectable families, whatever their rank may be, go to theatres protected and kept out of the way of witnessing any thing improper, or in so transient a manner as to be scarcely apprehended, and soon forgotten. It is, then, the effect which coming in contact with such company may have on young men that must chiefly be attended to. Formerly, when a youth came from the country to London, he went to the Theatre in attendance on the ladies of some sober family, to whose notice he might be recommended. Often some good aunt, cousin, or friend, pointed out to him the beauties and defects of the play, or the remarkable people present amongst the spectators, if any such were there; and near her and her party, he was kept out of the reach of contamination. He most probably attended this friendly party home, and had some slight refreshment with them before he returned to his solitary lodging, and next morning he awoke with a pleased fancy and an easy mind. In those days, too, young men, resident in London, went frequently to the Theatre with their mothers or sisters, or other members of

their own family; and even if they went alone, the probability of their meeting some of their respectable acquaintance was a salutary check upon the dangerous spirit of adventure. But now this is no longer the case: the simple stripling goes by himself, or with some companion equally thoughtless and imprudent; and the confidence he feels there of not being under the observation of any whom he is likely to meet elsewhere, gives him a freedom to follow every bent of his present inclination, however dangerous.

Nay, there are some excellent persons who carry the matter so far as to wage general war against pleasures derived from imagination. To bring before the mind representations of strong passions, they say, is dangerous and unfavourable to virtue. Most assuredly, if they are brought before the mind as examples, or as things slightly to be blamed, as evils unavoidably incident to human nature, they are dangerous; but if they are exhibited as warnings, and as that which produces, when indulged, great human misery and debasement, they teach us a lesson more powerful than many that proceed from the academical chair or the pulpit. Consistently with this maxim, historians, too, should refrain from animated and descriptive

narrations of treasons, insurrections, sieges, and battles; and the praises bestowed upon Livy, and other ancient writers, for having made the events they relate, with their causes, viz. the strong passions of men, so vividly present to the imagination of the reader, instead of being their glory, becomes their reproach. The history of nations ought, upon this principle, to be given in the most calm, concise manner, as a story upon which to fasten maxims, observations, and advice, but by no means to excite or interest; and what would formerly have been called the dullest book must be esteemed the best. What I have ventured to say of history will also apply to novels, and all works of fiction. Even the master-pieces of our painters and sculptors are liable to similar animadversion: in proportion as they excel in the higher departments of art they are dangerous. For what have been the subjects of such works, but the actions of men under the influence of strong passions?

Were the pleasures we derive from works of imagination discouraged and set aside, should we become more intellectual and more virtuous under their didactic matter-of-fact system? I apprehend not; but rather that the increase of gratifications allied to the inferior part of our

nature would, by degrees, prevail over those of a higher derivation. I readily admit that I cannot be considered as an unbiassed judge upon this subject; but the observations I have presumed to lay before my Reader, must with him stand or fall according to their own justice or importance.

THE

SEPARATION:

A TRAGEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN.

GARCIO, *an Italian Count.*
ROVANI, *his Friend.*
GONZALOS, *an old Officer.*
THE MARQUIS OF TORTONA.
LUDOVIQUO, *Seneschal of the Castle.*
GAUVINO, *Chamberlain.*
PIETRO, GOMEZ, } *Servants.*
Hermit, *&c. &c.*

WOMEN.

MARGARET, *Wife to Garcio.*
SOPHERA, *her Attendant and Friend.*
Nurse, *&c.*

Scene, a small State in Italy.

THE SEPARATION.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — *A Chamber, with a great Screen at the bottom of the Stage, behind which part of a Bed is seen, and Voices heard as the Curtain draws up, while* PIETRO *and* GOMEZ *are discovered on the front, looking from a half-opened door, as if listening.*

GOMEZ.

WHAT said he last? the word died on his tongue.

PIETRO.

So much the better.

GOMEZ.

Makes he confession? Hast thou listen'd long?
He ever wore, ev'n in his days of health,
The scowling eye of an unquiet mind,
And some black deed disturbs his end. Ev'n so;
Thy face confirms it.

PIETRO.

We shall be discovered.

[*Exeunt, shutting the door softly, while* LUDOVIQUO *and* GAUVINO *come forward from behind the screen.*]

GAUVINO (*looking earnestly at* LUDOVIQUO, *before he speaks*).

What thinkest thou of it?

LUDOVIQUO.

It is very strange.

GAUVINO.

'Tis but the fever'd ravings of disease:
Hast thou more serious thoughts?

LUDOVIQUO.

I would our good confessor were arrived,
Whate'er my thoughts may be.

GAUVINO.

Ay; then I can divine them. To my judgment,
He speaks like one more forced to utterance
By agony of mind than the brain's sickness.
The circumstances of the horrid deed;
The wond'rous fleetness of his gallant steed
Which bore Count Garcio through the forest paths ——

LUDOVIQUO.

Cease, cease! I would the father were arrived.

GAUVINO.

It was his fav'rite steed, and yet he ne'er
Made mention of its name or of its end,
But, when we prais'd its fleetness, frown'd in silence.
I've wonder'd oft at this, but thought no ill.

LUDOVIQUO.

Nor think it now. It is not credible, —
Making, as then he did, a lover's suit
To the fair Margaret, Ulrico's sister, —
That he should murder him.

GAUVINO.

He was the heir of all Ulrico's lands.

LUDOVIQUO.

True; so he was.

GAUVINO.

Ulrico loved him not, and oft opposed
His suit as most presumptuous. But for this,
Her brother's sudden end, the lovely maid
Had ne'er been Garcio's wife.

LUDOVIQUO.

All this is true; and yet, perhaps, those facts
Have on the mind of this poor dying wretch
Impress'd dark fancies, which the fever'd brain
Shapes into actual deed. Oh, it is horrible!
Canst thou believe one of his noble race
Could do a deed befitting ruffian hands,

And only such? Had he thus wickedly
Devised Ulrico's death, some hir'd assassin
Had done the bloody work, not his own hands.

GAUVINO.

Well, but what think'st thou of his strange aversion
To this, the goodliest seat our country boasts?
Although his countess oft hath urged him to it,
He hath not since his marriage here resided,—
Nay, hath not pass'd a night within these walls:
And, but that he is absent at the wars,
Ev'n though the recent earthquake has in ruins
His other castle laid, and forced us thence,
This mansion had remain'd untenanted.

LUDOVIQUO.

I would the ghostly father were arrived!

(*Voice heard behind the screen.*)

Blood will accuse:—am I not curs'd for this?

LUDOVIQUO.

He speaks again: I thought that for the while
He had been sunk into a state of stupor.
Go thou and watch by him, Gauvino; haste!
For steps approach, and none must be admitted.

(GAUVINO *retires behind the screen; and* LUDOVIQUO, *running to the door, meets* SOPHERA, *and endeavours to prevent her entering.*)

Thou may'st not come: he's still; he is asleep:
Thou canst not see him.

(*Voice heard again.*)

SOPHERA.

Asleep, say'st thou? do I not hear his voice?
Nay, let me pass; I will not be withheld.
My lady follows me with some good drug
To chafe his brow, poor wretch! and give him comfort.

LUDOVIQUO.

Return, and tell the countess to forbear:
She must not see him; foul unwholesome air
Has made the chambers noxious. Hie thee back,
And say she must not come.

SOPHERA.

And dost thou think this will prevent her? Never,
Ev'n from the sick bed of her meanest servant,
Hath she stood fearfully aloof, when comfort
Could be administer'd. —
I've seen the pain-rack'd wretch smile in his pain
To see his lady's sweetly pitying face
Peep past his ragged curtain, like a gleam
Of kindly sunshine, bidding him good morrow.
And thinkest thou now, from this poor dying man,

The oldest faithful follower of her lord,
To keep her back with such a plea as this?

LUDOVIQUO.

Cease! urge no more. Return; she must not come:
The sick man is distorted—grown, and changed,
Fearful to look upon: a lady's gentleness
May not such sight abide.

SOPHERA.

A poor excuse!
Hast thou forgotten when those wounded soldiers
Lay near our walls, after a bloody skirmish
Left on the field from which their comrades fled,
How she did stand, with steady master'd pity,
'Midst horrid sights from which her women fled
With looks averted, till each bleeding wretch
Was bound and comforted? Distorted, sayest thou!
Who goes to chambers of disease and death
To look on pleasant sights?

(*Voice again.*)

I did not murder him.

SOPHERA.

He spoke of murder!

(LUDOVIQUO *pressing her back as she presses eagerly towards the screen, whilst* GAUVINO *comes forward to assist him.*)

LUDOVIQUO.

Thou shalt as soon pass through my body, fool!
Such cursed obstinacy! art thou mad?
If thou regard'st thy lady's peace of mind,
Fly, I conjure thee, and prevent her coming.

Enter COUNTESS *behind them.*

COUNTESS.

And why, good Ludoviquo?

LUDOVIQUO *(who starts on seeing her).*

Gracious Heaven!

COUNTESS.

Why look'st thou so aghast? Is Baldwin dead?

LUDOVIQUO.

He is; and therefore go not.
(She still endeavours to pass.)
No, no! he is not; be entreated, madam!

COUNTESS.

What cause so strangely moves thee?

LUDOVIQUO.

A powerful cause, that must not be reveal'd.
O, be entreated, then!

(Voice again.)

Ulrico's blood was shed by Garcio's hand,
Yet I must share the curse.

LUDOVIQUO.

Run to him quickly! wherefore didst thou
leave him?

(GAUVINO *again retires as before.*)

COUNTESS.

What words were those he uttered?

LUDOVIQUO.

Words of despair and frenzy; heed them not,
But quit the chamber. O, for Heaven's sake, go!

[*Exeunt* LUDOVIQUO, *hurrying off the* COUNTESS *and* SOPHERA.

SCENE II.

A small Anteroom or Passage.

Enter PIETRO *and* GOMEZ *by opposite sides.*

GOMEZ.

Is the confessor with poor Baldwin still?

PIETRO.

He is; but, as I guess, will leave him presently:
I heard, just now, the chamber-door unlock'd.
I'll keep my station here, and see him pass.

GOMEZ.

And so will I. Ha! yonder, see, he comes.

PIETRO.

His head bends to the ground, and o'er his eyes
His hood is drawn: would I could see his face!
He is the cousin of our seneschal, —
I'll speak to him.

Enter a Friar, *walking hastily across the Stage.*

Good father! give your blessing:
How is your penitent?

[Friar *waves him off with his hand, and exit.*

GOMEZ.

He motions with his hand, and will not speak.

PIETRO.

In so much haste to go! this is not well.
(*Shaking his head.*)
No, no! it hath a dark and rueful look.
Well; God be praised! these hands are free
from blood.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

The Apartment of the Countess; *she is discovered pacing to and fro with slow, thoughtful steps, then stops short, and stands in a musing posture some time before she speaks aloud.*

'Tis often thus; so are we framed by nature.
How oft the fitful wind or sullen bell
Will utter to the ear distinctive words,

According with the fancy's wild conceptions!
So are the brains of sick and frenzied men
Stored with unreal and strange imaginations.
(*After a short pause.*) Am I become a maniac?
Oh! have words,
To which the firm conviction of my mind
So strongly stands opposed, the baleful power
To fix this misery on me? This is madness!

Enter SOPHERA *behind.*

Is't thee, Sophera?

SOPHERA.

Yes, 'tis only me.

COUNTESS.

Is every decent office of respect
Done to the corse?

SOPHERA.

Yes, nought has been omitted.

COUNTESS.

'Tis well; but what detains the good confessor?
I wish'd to see him.

SOPHERA.

He stay'd but till his wretched penitent
Had breath'd his last, and quickly left the castle.

COUNTESS.

He is in haste, methinks; 'tis somewhat strange.
Why look'st thou on me with that fearful eye?

Think'st thou the ravings of a frenzied mind
Have power to move me?

SOPHERA.

I only thought — I fear'd — you wisely judge;
Why should they move you? Well, the dismal story
Of that most dismal murder, here committed
By hands unknown, might to a sickly brain
Such thoughts create of nothing.

COUNTESS.

What say'st thou? here committed!

SOPHERA.

Did not your hapless brother in this castle
Come to his end?

COUNTESS.

Yes, but a natural end.

SOPHERA.

So grant it were, it is not so reported.

COUNTESS.

Ha! what is else reported?

SOPHERA.

The peasants round, all idle stories credit;
And say that in his castle, by his servants,
He was discover'd in the eastern tower
Murder'd. But, doubtless, 'tis a tale of falsehood,
Since 'tis to thee unknown.

COUNTESS (*sinking back into a chair*).

It was to me unknown.
(*After a long pause.*) Dear, dear! the friend,
the brother of my heart,
The playmate of my early, happy days,
Could such a fate be thine!
It makes me weep to think it possible,
Yet I believe it not.

SOPHERA.

You tremble much.

COUNTESS.

I'm cold and chill: 'tis weariness of body;
Do not regard it; I shall soon be better.
(*Trumpet sounds without.*)
A trumpet! then some martial guest approaches.
O most unwelcome!

SOPHERA.

'Tis Tortona's Marquis.

COUNTESS.

He is not in these parts; it cannot be.

SOPHERA.

He is upon his march with some gay troops
To join the army, and hath made a halt
Here in our nearest town to rest his men.
So said his servant, whom I found this morning
Lurking within the castle; and I guess
His warlike lord is come.

COUNTESS.

I cannot see him.
Go thou; plead my excuse: I am unwell;
Say what thou wilt, but let me be excused.

Enter ROVANI.

Rovani here! — O, how is this? My lord?

ROVANI.

He is not far behind. I am, fair lady,
The vanguard of his band; and, as I trust,
Bearing no dismal tidings.

COUNTESS.

O no! they should, indeed, be joyful, if —
And, as in truth I trust — my lord is well!

ROVANI.

Yes; from the wars, unhurt and strong in health,
Garcio returns! where he has done the service
Of an undaunted powerful combatant,
To that of a right skilful leader join'd.
He is not one of your reserved chiefs,
Who, pointing with their dainty fingers, thus,
Say, "Go, my friends, attack yon frowning ranks."
No, by my faith! with heavy cimeter
He closes to the bloody work himself,
And to the carnage of each grizly field
Brings his full tale of death.

COUNTESS (*shrinking back*).

Is he so ruthless, then?

ROVANI.

Ay, in the field.
But in your hall or bower, where ladies smile,
Who is more gentle? Thus it often is:
A lady feels not on her soldier's hand,
That softly presses her more gentle palm,
The deaths which it has dealt.

SOPHERA.

I'm sure, were but thy rapier like thy tongue,
The count must have in thee an able second.

ROVANI.

I may not boast; but doth my circled finger
More rudely press thy snowy arm, fair maid,
Because this graven jewel was the gift
Of a great Moorish princess, whose rude foe
I slew before her eyes?

SOPHERA.

Some angry puppy that with snarling mouth
Snapp'd at her robe or sandal'd heels, belike.

ROVANI.

Nay, by my faith! a foe in worth mine equal.

SOPHERA.

That I will grant thee readily. But say,
How far behind thee is the noble count?

COUNTESS.

Ay, is he near?

ROVANI.

Within a few short miles.
The war has ended sooner than we guess'd,
And we have made good speed.

COUNTESS.

So near!

ROVANI.

How is it? This affects you strangely.

COUNTESS.

Such unexpected news! I should be glad,
But gladness comes with pain. I will retire,
And for a moment strive to calm this tremor.
(*To* SOPHERA.) Follow me not.

[*Exit.*

ROVANI (*looking after her as she goes off*).

I have, ere now, beheld the sudden news
Of a good lord's return from foreign lands
By wedded dame received; but so received,
Never till now. How's this? What is the matter?
How shall a simple bachelor, as I am,
Have thoughts of this bless'd state, if such as she
Cold and capricious prove?

SOPHERA.

Blame her not hastily; she is depress'd:
Old Baldwin, whom his master left behind,
That faithful servant, died with us this morning.

ROVANI.

Alas, poor soul! and he is gone at last!
Well, we have brought you thirsty throats enow
To drink his fun'ral wassals. Ay, poor Baldwin!
A hardy knave thou wert in better days.
If I had known of this, Heaven rest his soul!
I had not sounded my approach so cheerly.

SOPHERA.

To tell the truth, that martial sound deceived us.
We took you for Tortona's warlike lord,
Who, to refresh his passing troops, we hear,
Has made a halt: — I thought ——

ROVANI.

Out with thy thought!
Why dost thou hesitate? — I will explain it.
I 've brought you disappointment.

SOPHERA.

You mistake me.

ROVANI.

Nay, pardon me; I linger here too long:
But, — ere I go, — how does the infant heir?
I must tell Garcio I have seen his boy.

SOPHERA.

With pleasure I 'll conduct thee. 'Tis an urchin

Provoking smiles of love from every face
That looks upon him, be it e'er so stern.

ROVANI.

How then will a fond father feel! — How oft—
How oft and fondly hath he talk'd of him!
Though but a little grasp of shapeless life,
With puling whine, just winking to the light,
As I remember well, when Garcio left him.

SOPHERA.

Is Garcio, then, so tender?

ROVANI.

Dost thou doubt it?
The bear doth love his cub, bear though he be:
But Garcio is a man of strong affections.
Come, pray thee, lead.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A wild Alley with a Grove behind. Martial Music heard without.*

Then enter GARCIO *with his* Soldiers *on march, and* GONZALOS.

GARCIO.

Halt, my brave comrades; here we'll rest a while

Till sultry noon be past. Those spreading trees
Will give you shade.
(*To* GONZALOS.) See'st thou Rovani coming?

GONZALOS.

No, good my lord; but through the trees I see
Your castle's turrets brighten'd with the sun.
Look there! it is a fair, enliv'ning sight.

GARCIO (*turning away, after a hasty look*).

I see, I see. — But wherefore stays Rovani!
(*To Soldiers.*) Go, choose, each as he lists, his spot of rest;
I 'll keep me here.

(GONZALOS *and the* Soldiers *retire to the bottom of the Stage, but still appear partially through the trees.*)

(*After musing some time.*) An infant's life!
What is an infant's life? The chilly blast,
That nips the blossom, o'er the cradle breathes,
And child and dam like blighted sweetness fade.
If this should be! O, dear, uncertain bliss!
Shame on his tardy steps! — Ha! here he comes!

Enter ROVANI, *while* GARCIO *runs up to him eagerly.*

They are alive? they 're well? And thou hast seen them?

ROVANI.

Your lady and your son?

GARCIO (*impatiently*).

Ay, ay!

ROVANI.

They 're well.

GARCIO.

Thank Heaven, they are! — But yet thy words are slow:
Does she not follow thee? Waits she my coming?

ROVANI.

She surely does expect it.

GARCIO.

What voice, what looks are these? O speak more freely!
If there is mercy in thee, speak more freely!
(*Pauses and looks earnestly at him.*)
Something is wrong —— I have nor wife nor child!

ROVANI.

They are both well: have I not spoke plain words?

GARCIO.

Plain words! yes, baldly plain; reserved and heartless.
Thou dost not use me like a fellow soldier,
In the same warfare worn. — What hast thou seen?

Thou say'st my lady's well: did she receive,
With a wife's joy, the news of my return?

ROVANI.

I am not skill'd to say; for dispositions
Of various hues are variously affected.
The news were sudden and unlook'd for: oft
The joy of such is clouded and disturb'd.
She did withdraw in secrecy to hide
Her strong emotions.

GARCIO.

She was strongly moved?

ROVANI.

I know not how it was. — The servants, too,
Whisper'd together as I pass'd, and look'd
With a strange staring gravity upon me.
Dull clowns! who should have cast their caps in air
For joy of your return. — Baldwin is dead;
And if for him they wear those sombre looks,
Good piteous souls they are. — A courtly damsel,
Attending on the Countess, did, forsooth!
Mistake my trumpet for the glad arrival
Of some gay visitor, who was expected;
Whose buxom train, no doubt, contains some youth
More grateful to her sight than war-worn knight,
Such as my paltry self.

GARCIO.

What visitor?

ROVANI.

That very martial lord,
The Marquis of Tortona, save his worth!
For he conducts his soldiers through these parts,
And makes a halt in this fair neighbourhood,
Some days or so, for needful recreation. (*A pause.*)
What! stay we here to ruminate upon it?
Will that avail? — Come, onward to the castle!
And, be our welcome there or cold or kind,
'T is what Heaven sends us.

GARCIO.

Off; disturb me not!
Thy heart is light.

ROVANI.

No, Garcio; 't is not light
If thine be heavy. I have told my tale
Too well I see it now — but foolishly:
Yet their cold looks provok'd me. — Brood not on it:
There is one face, at least, within your walls
Will smile on you with sweet and guileless smiles:
A noble boy, — might call a monarch father,
Ay, by my faith! and do him honour, too.

GARCIO.

Does he lisp sounds already? — And so lovely?
I've found tears now, press'd being that I am!

Come then; I'll summon strength: whate'er
betide,
Or good or ill, I'll meet it.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

An Apartment in the Castle.

Enter COUNTESS *and* SOPHERA.

COUNTESS.

He is within the gates; here will I stop,
Nor wander further: I'll receive him here.
(*Listening.*) Heaven give me strength! his well
known steps so near me!

Enter GARCIO; *he runs eagerly to embrace the* COUNTESS, *who faints.*

GARCIO.

So moved! Can this be joy?

(SOPHERA *chafes her hands and temples, while* GARCIO *gazes on her with keen observation: she recovers.*)

My gentle love,
Who wert my gentle love, come I upon thee

Like some unlook'd for, — some unwelcome thing?

COUNTESS.

Is it thy voice, my Garcio, in mine ears
Sounding, as it was wont, the voice of love?

GARCIO.

How should it sound to thee?—The wars have spared me;
The bullet and the sabre's stroke have err'd,
To spare this head, where thousands fell around me:
For I believed thy saintly prayers did mar
Their death-commissioned power. — Yes; I believed it.

COUNTESS.

And still believe it. — Yes, my prayers were raised
Most fervently to Heaven: and I will bless it,
That thou art safe. (*Takes his hand in hers tenderly, and is about to press it to her breast, when a shuddering seizes her, and she lets it drop.*)

GARCIO.

What is the matter? Thou art strangely seized.
Does sudden illness chill thee?

SOPHERA.

The Countess, good my Lord, is much o'ercome.

Her health is weak at present: agitation
Strongly affects her. But she'll soon recover.

GARCIO.

Thou answ'rest for her readily, young lady,
And wisely too.

Enter ROVANI, *followed by* Nurse, *carrying a sleeping infant.*

ROVANI.

Come on, good Nurse; thou need'st not be ashamed
To show thy bantling, sleeping or awake.
A nobler, comelier, curly-pated urchin
Ne'er changed the face of stern and warlike sire
To tearful tenderness. — Look here, my Lord.

GARCIO (*turning eagerly round*).

The child! my child! (*Lifting the mantle that covers it, and gazing on the infant.*)

ROVANI.

Ay, there are cheeks and lips like roses glowing;
And, see, half-open'd eyelids show within
The dewy azure of his sleeping eyes,
Like loopholes in a cloud. — Awake, sweet imp!

GARCIO.

Nay, wake him not; his sleep is beautiful.
Let me support —— Come to my stirring heart,

And here be cradled, thing of wond'rous joy!
(*Taking the child.*)
Here, in the inmost core of beating life,
I'd lodge thee. Mine thou art! yes, thou art mine!
Here is my treasured being: thou wilt love me.
(*Laying his face close to the child's.*)
Blest softness! little hand and little cheek!
This is a touch so sweet! a blessed touch!
There is love in it; love that will not change!
(*Bursting into tears, while the* Nurse *takes the child again.*)

COUNTESS (*aside, observing his emotion*).

O heaven, he weeps! — the tears of strong affection!
Away, base doubts! (*Running to him, and clasping her arms round him.*)
Garcio, dear Garcio! husband of my heart,
And father of my boy! is there within thee
Such soft and strong affection? O, there is!
And with it every good and generous feeling.
Forgive me, O forgive me!

GARCIO.

How, my love?
How wakes this sudden burst of tenderness?
Dost thou at last feel for thy wretched husband
The love of other days? — I've thought of thee —
I've thought of this our meeting, but, alas!
Not so my fancy shaped it.

COUNTESS.

O, forgive me!
My mind was weak and brooded on dark thoughts.
We'll cast them from us.—Yes, thy child, thy boy!
Look on him still: they say that in his face
There are some traits of thine. Observe his mouth;
That smile ——

GARCIO.

Nay, that sweet smile I could not give him;
No, nor those lips. He much resembles thee.

COUNTESS.

Thinkest thou so? Then haply thou perceiv'st
Another likeness some have sadly traced;
Dost thou perceive it?

GARCIO.

No: another likeness?

COUNTESS.

In my sad lonely hours, I have imagined,
And sooth'd me with the pleasing, mournful thought,
He bears some faint resemblance to my brother,
My poor Ulrico.

(GARCIO's *countenance becomes stern, and looking again stedfastly on the child, he turns away in silence.*)

It does not strike thee, then?

GARCIO (*motioning the* Nurse *to retire*).
We shall disturb his slumbers.

COUNTESS (*to him reproachfully*).
Sent off without a kiss of kind endearment?

GARCIO.
We should disturb him. (*Looking after the child as he is carried off.*)

COUNTESS.
Thine eye pursues him with a mournful look:
Thou fear'st, perhaps, an early fate may snap
His thread of life, like his lamented uncle's.

GARCIO.
No; past and future are but shadowy visions;
Dark cumb'rous things which we must cast aside
To make the present hour endurable.
Who waits without? — A cup of wine, I pray;
I'm tir'd and faint.

COUNTESS.
Indeed, thou seem'st unwell:
I fear thou bring'st not back thy wonted health.

GARCIO.
I'm well, — I was in health, but this damp region,
I breathe not in it but with breath suppress'd.
Thou know'st right well I never liked this place:
Why art thou here?

COUNTESS.

It is necessity.

GARCIO.

I know; I know; but other homes there are;
We'll hence to-morrow.

COUNTESS.

Ha! so soon, my lord?

GARCIO.

It must be so. I would retire awhile;
Where is my chamber?

COUNTESS.

In the western tower.

GARCIO.

No; I'll remain—I will not yet retire.
(*Pacing to and fro, and then returning to her.*)
I know not how it is; I'm fanciful;
I like a southern chamber.

COUNTESS (*in a faint voice, gazing fearfully upon him*).

Ev'n as you will.

(SOPHERA, *who has during the greater part of this scene retired to the bottom of the Stage with* ROVANI, *now comes forward.*)

SOPHERA.

Please you, my lord, to go, I will conduct you
Where many fair apartments wait your choice.

GARCIO.

I thank thee, courteous maid.

[*Exit* SOPHERA, *followed by* GARCIO; *and the* COUNTESS, *after a thoughtful pause, is about to break into strong exclamations, when, perceiving* ROVANI, *she checks herself and goes out hastily.*)

ROVANI (*coming forward, and looking after her*).

All is not well: that step, those looks, those gestures,
So quickly check'd when she perceiv'd me near,
Betray too visibly a mind disturb'd
And far remov'd from joy. Garcio is come
Unwelcomely upon her. Yet that burst
Of what appear'd like tenderness and love
When he caress'd his child! — I cannot think
She has in act been false; tho' much I doubt.

Enter GONZALOS *behind him.*

GONZALOS.

Ha! mutt'ring to thyself! what are thy thoughts?

ROVANI.

Faith! ill-condition'd, moody, foolish thoughts,
Such as lone men, whose heart no kind mate cheers,
Alone could harbour. — Heaven forgive me for it!

I think our lady here had been well pleased
If this, her valiant lord, had from the wars
Return'd more leisurely. — Her quondam lover,
The Marquis of Tortona, in the neighbourhood
With his gay troops, bound for some petty fray
By them, in lofty phrase, yclep'd war,
Has made a halt, and ——

GONZALOS.

Fie! thou canst not think
That she could turn her heart from valiant Garcio
To such a fool as he?

ROVANI.

Yet such strange things have happen'd. — True, indeed,
So vile a change could not at once be made.
But let us now imagine some soft dame,
Whose valiant lord is absent, in her castle
Spending her dull lone days. (*Changing his voice, and speaking fantastically.*) "Ha! who comes here?" —
"Good Madam," saith her waiting gentlewoman,
"A knight is at your gate." — "He shall not enter:
It is a fool; go, bid him wend his way." —
"And will you be so rude?" — "Ay, true indeed;
Then, for good courtesy, since it must be,
Ev'n bid him enter: — 'tis a harmless fool." —

"Good day, fair Dame."—"The same to you,
Sir Knight."—
"Might I presume—but how can words ex-
press it,
The sunshine of your beauty dazzles so!—
You will not chide me hence? What gentle
goodness!
Dear, precious moments, but so swiftly gone!"—
Then whispers low the waiting gentlewoman,
"Madam, may he return another day?"—
"Well, well, he may, since thou wilt have it so.
It is in truth an amiable fool."

GONZALOS.

Fie, fie, Rovani! art thou not asham'd?
Who would believe, in hearing thee expatiate
On woman's weakness thus, that thou thyself
Art but a poor dependent on her favour
For all the bloom and sparkle of thy being—
A very daily beggar of her smiles!

ROVANI.

I, say'st thou? Where, in what nook of the earth,
Lives she for whom I sigh?

GONZALOS.

Nay, rather ask in what nook of the earth
She liveth not. There's ne'er a moving thing,
That wears upon its form a woman's weed,
Be it or short or tall, or pale or buxom,
Or young or old, but thou dost roll thine eye,

And writhe thy body to fantastic shapes
Of affectation, to attract her notice.

ROVANI.

Nay, spare me, good Gonzalos! I, perhaps,
May, as I speak my jest or merry tale,
With restless eye keep peering to the side
Where beauty listens, too apparently;
But think not this attack on female constancy—
I mean this present individual push —
By any other motive has been prompted,
Than love and true regard for noble Garcio.
After the toils and dangers he has pass'd,
To see him thus received provokes me much.

GONZALOS.

Hush! be more prudent; speak thy mind less freely.
Thy brain is ever full of idle fancies:
Come to the air, and cool thy fev'rish spleen.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

Before the Gate of the Castle.

Enter LUDOVIQUO, GAUVINO, *and some inferior* Domestics *from the gate, while martial Music is heard without.*

GAUVINO (*to* LUDOVIQUO, *after looking off the stage*).

'T is as I guess'd; look, Mr. Seneschal!
They bear the ensigns of Tortona. See!
Their chief himself is marching in the van.

LUDOVIQUO.

And, by my fay! a warlike face he wears,
Lofty and grim.

GAUVINO.

Ay; full of awful terrors
For quaking drum-boys and poor piping elves.

LUDOVIQUO.

Comes he to visit thus our valiant lord,
And show his warlike state? Heaven mend his wit!

Enter TORTONA, *with a few followers, in martial array.*

TORTONA.

Be not alarm'd, good sirs: though thus in arms,
We at your lady's gate are harmless visitors,
Who humbly crave admittance.

(LUDOVIQUO, *as Seneschal, steps forward to receive him with courtesy, while* GAUVINO *mutters to himself.*)

GAUVINO.

Mighty man!
What blest forbearance! For our lady's sake,
He will not slay and eat us for a meal!

TORTONA (*to* LUDOVIQUO).

Good Mr. Seneschal! inform thy lady
That I, Tortona's Marquis, and her slave,
Most humbly beg permission at her feet—
But here comes opportunity more tempting:
A gentler messenger.

Enter SOPHERA.

GAUVINO (*aside to* LUDOVIQUO).

Great condescending man! superb humility!

TORTONA (*to* SOPHERA).

Fair Lady! most becoming, as I guess,

The beauteous dame you serve; do me the
favour (*speaking in a lower voice, and
leading her aside*)
To tell the noble mistress of this castle
That one, devoted dearly to her service,
Who breathes the air in which she breathes, as
gales
Wafted from Paradise, begs in her presence
With all devotion to present himself.

SOPHERA (*in a loud voice*).

The Marquis of Tortona, as I guess.

TORTONA.

The same; and let not in your peaceful halls
Our warlike mien alarm you. In the field
Whate'er our power may be, forget it here.
Within her precincts, Mars himself would doff
His nodding helm, and bend in meek submission.

SOPHERA.

True, valiant Lord; the brave are ever gentle
In hall and bower. But think not warlike guise
Will so alarm us now: there are within
Whose nodding plumes, indeed, less downy are,
Whose well-hack'd armour wears a dimmer hue,
Who have already taught our timid eyes
To look more boldly on such awful things.

TORTONA.

How, those within? What mean'st thou?

SOPHERA.

Ha, my Lord!
You come not then to wish the gentle Countess
Joy of her lord's return.

TORTONA.

Is he return'd? It surely cannot be.

SOPHERA.

He is, in truth. This morning he arrived
With many valiant soldiers from the wars,
Where they have seen rough service.

TORTONA.

That war so quickly ended?

SOPHERA.

Yes, my Lord,
And fortunately too. The Moors submit
To the victorious arms of noble Garcio;
Who, ere he left their coast, did for his prince
A happy peace conclude. Will it not please you
To enter, then, and bid him welcome home?

TORTONA.

I should indeed,—but 't will intrude upon him.
He and his lady may, perhaps, desire
Some hours of privacy.—Oblige me, then,
And offer my respect—congratulation—
I do but ill express the joy I feel.
I will no longer trespass. (*Hurrying away, and then returning.*)

'T is delicacy makes me thus in haste,
As thou wilt comprehend. Should time permit,
Though much I fear to-morrow's sun will light us
To other scenes, I will return and pay
To the most noble Count all courtesy.
Fair maiden, fare thee well! (*Hurrying away, and returning again; then drawing her further aside and speaking softly in her ear.*)
The Count, as I am told, dislikes this castle:
His stay, perhaps, may be of short duration?

SOPHERA.

Belike it may.

TORTONA.

Though quitting this vicinity,
My station for a time will not be distant.
Couldst thou in such a case indite to me
A little note of favour? (*Taking her hand.*)
Pretty hand!
A billet penn'd by thee must needs contain
Words of sweet import.—Fingers light and slender!
(*Offering to put on a ring.*) Let this be favour'd.

SOPHERA.

Nay, my Lord, excuse me.
The pen these fingers use indites no billets
Of such sweet import as you fondly guess:
A housewife's recipe, or homely letter
Of kind inquiry to some absent friend,

Exhausts its power. Unskill'd to earn such gifts,
I may not wear them.—Yonder comes Rovani,
A noble soldier; stay and learn from him
The story of the war. Word-bound he is not:
He'll tell it willingly.

(ROVANI, *who has appeared at the gate, during the latter part of their discourse, observing them suspiciously, now comes forward.*)

TORTONA.

No, no! I am in haste, farewell, farewell!
[*Exit with his followers.*

LUDOVIQUO.

He goes, I trow, less grandly than he came.

GAUVINO.

Such hasty steps, indeed, somewhat derange
The order of his high nobility.

LUDOVIQUO.

Yet, pompous as he is, I have been told
He is no coward.

GAUVINO.

I suspect him much.

LUDOVIQUO.

But thou art wrong: although he doth assume
Those foolish airs of martial gallantry,
He is as brave as others.

ROVANI (*who has placed himself directly in front of* SOPHERA, *and has been looking for some time significantly in her face*).

So, gentle maid, your martial visitor
Retreats right speedily. How fortunate,
To meet so opportunely at the gate
A prudent friend, to tell him what, perhaps,
May save his bones, although it damp his pleasure!
Nay, smile not: I commend thee in good earnest.
Thou art a prudent maid, endow'd with virtues
That suit thy station. This is ample praise.

SOPHERA.

Ample; and spoken too with meaning tones.
What face is this thou wear'st of sly significance?
Go to! thou dup'st thyself with too much shrewdness;
And canst not see what plainly lies before thee,
Because thou aim'st at seeing more. I'll in,
And bear Tortona's greeting to my Lord
And to his Countess.

ROVANI.

Do; and give it all —
The message and its postscript: words of audience,
And those of gentle whisper following after.
Let nothing be forgotten.

SOPHERA.

Nothing shall.

Good day, and Heaven curtail thee of thy wits
To make thee wiser! [*Exit into the gate, and followed by* LUDOVIQUO, *&c. &c.*

ROVANI (*alone*).

Ay, ay! a very woman! pleased and flatter'd
With the stale flatt'ry of a practised coxcomb,
Though plainly sueing for another's favour.
A very, very woman! — As I guess'd,
Some secret intercourse hath been in train,
Although how far in blameful act advanced
I know not. — Now, 't is cross'd and interrupted.
So will I e'en believe, and fret no more.
What good have I in living free from wedlock,
If I for husband's honour thus take thought?
Better it were to wear the horns myself,
Knowing it not, than fret for other men. [*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I. — *An Apartment in the Castle.*

Enter GARCIO *and* LUDOVIQUO, *speaking as they enter.*

GARCIO.

Ha! with a priest! conferring with a priest!
Have they been long together?

LUDOVIQUO.

Full an hour.

GARCIO.

And does she oft such ghostly counsel take?
Has she of late?

LUDOVIQUO.

My Lord?

GARCIO.

O, nothing! nothing!
Stare not as if I meant to question thee:
I had no more to say. (*Motioning him away.*)
[*Exit* LUDOVIQUO.
(*Alone.*) At such a time retired with her confessor!
What! hath her lord's return caused in her mind
Such sudden need of ghostly counsel?—Strange!
Something hath been amiss: if not in act,
She is, I fear, in will and fancy tainted.

ROVANI *enters behind him unperceived.*

ROVANI.

Nay, pure or tainted, leave the fancy free.
Of her concerns who may cognisance take?
Although cowl'd priests beneath their jurisdiction
Pretend to hold her, be not thou so strict.

GARCIO.

Thou know'st, then, that my wife is with her priest.

ROVANI.

I knew it not. — She is a pious dame:
She seems — she is a very pious dame.

GARCIO.

Nay, speak thy mind! thou need'st not hesitate.
We have been fellow-soldiers nine long years:
Thou ne'er wert wont to weigh thy words with me.
What dost thou think? There is some cause for this.

ROVANI.

Women are full of strange and fitful humours.

GARCIO.

Not so; it is not that. — Yet, were she false,
Methinks her shame-flush'd face would turn aside,
Nor look on me so oft and earnestly
As I have seen her gaze. — It cannot be!
In act she is not false. — But if her heart,
Where every kind and dear affection dwelt, —
If it be changed — (*stamping on the ground*)
Some fiend hath been at work, —
Some cursed agent hath been tamp'ring with her.
(*Pacing to and fro in violent agitation.*)

ROVANI.

Be not so wretched for a doubtful ill,
Which, if it be at all ——

GARCIO.

A doubtful ill!

Oh, if my head but ached, or fev'rish sleep,
Or the more potent secret cause forced from me
One groan or sigh, what tones of kind alarm!
And the soft pressure of her gentle hand
In mute affliction, till I smiled again!
Here, on my bursting heart I feel it still,
Though cold and changed she be.
(*After a gloomy pause.*) Perhaps some awful
and mysterious power
Within these fated precincts doth for me
Love to aversion turn.

ROVANI.

What dost thou mean by a mysterious power?
And but ev'n now methought I heard thee name
A potent secret cause.—Thou hast been wont
Freely to make me sharer of thy thoughts—
Of all thy secret wishes.

GARCIO.

So I have:
Nought for thy good to hear or mine to utter,
Have I conceal'd from thee.—I hear a noise.

ROVANI.

No; I hear nothing.

GARCIO.

But my ear is quick;—
Too quick, perhaps, in fancying sounds that are
not.

ROVANI.

Ay, thou art right: Sophera moved the latch.

Enter SOPHERA.

GARCIO (*to* SOPHERA).

Com'st thou to tell me that the priest is gone?

SOPHERA.

The Countess did command me to inform you
She is not well, and begs that for the night
She may in solitude recruit her spirits.
She wishes you good night and peaceful sleep.
She bade me say, my Lord, her malady
Is of no ardent kind that should alarm you;
But, as she hopes, will pass away ere morn.
(*Aside to* ROVANI, *while* GARCIO *turns away in silence.*) He takes it deeply.

ROVANI (*aside to her*).

No, faith! a soldier is too well inured
To disappointment; knowing not at daybreak
Whether his next night's slumber shall be had
On silken couch, by some fair princess fann'd,
Or on the cold damp earth, with dead men's bones
His wounded head to pillow. No, sweet maid!
We bear such evils lightly.

SOPHERA.

'T is well ye do; and so, brave Sir, good night!
[*Exit.*

GARCIO (*returning to* ROVANI).
What think'st thou of this message?

ROVANI.
I know not what to think.

GARCIO.
Thou dost! thou dost! for in thine eyes I read
A shameful thought, that must remain unutter'd.
Ruin, and shame, and misery come upon me!
Heaven pours its vengeance on this cursed head!

ROVANI.
Nay, do not thus give way: be well assured
Ere thou give loose to passion.

GARCIO.
Assur'd! and how assur'd? What can I do? —
Become a calm inquisitor of shame?

ROVANI.
Restrain thyself, and go to thine apartment,
As if to pass the night. But, some hours later,
When all are gone to rest, steal softly forth
Into thy lady's chamber. There thou'lt see
If she indeed be sick, or if she hold
The vigil of a guilt-distracted mind.

GARCIO.
I like thy counsel well: I'll to my chamber.
Good night, my friend.

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II.

The Bedchamber of the COUNTESS, *who is discovered sitting on a low seat by the side of the Bed, with her head and arms thrown upon the Bed. She raises her head, and, after a thoughtful pause, starts up eagerly.*

COUNTESS.

It cannot be! The roused and angry deep
Lashes its foaming billows o'er the bark
That bears th' accursed freight, till the scared crew
Into its yawning gulf casts forth the murderer.
On the embattled field, in armour cased,
His manly strength to blasted weakness turns.
Yea, in their peaceful homes, men, as by instinct,
From the dark rolling of his eye will turn
They know not why, so legibly has Nature
Set on his brow the mark of bloody Cain.
And shall I think the prosp'rous Garcio, — he
Whose countenance allured all eyes, whose smile,
Whose voice was love, whose frame with strong affection
I've seen so dearly moved; who in my arms,
Who in my heart hath lived — No! let dark priests,

From the wild fancies of a dying man,
Accuse him as they will, I'll not believe it.
(*After another pause.*) Would in this better faith
my mind had strength
To hold itself unshaken! Doubt is misery.
I'll go to him myself and tell my wretchedness.
O! if his kindling eye with generous ire
Repel the charge; — if his blest voice deny it,
Though one raised from the dead swore to its
truth,
I'll not believe it.

Enter SOPHERA.

What brings thee here again? Did I not charge
thee
To go to bed?

SOPHERA.

And so I did intend.
But in my chamber, half prepared for rest,
Op'ning the drawer of an ancient cabinet
To lay some baubles by, I found within ——

COUNTESS.

What hast thou found?

SOPHERA.

Have I not heard you say, that shortly after
Your marriage with the Count, from your apart-
ment,
A picture of your brother, clad in mail,

A strong resemblance, over which your tears
Had oft been shed, was stol'n away?

COUNTESS.

Thou hast.
How it was stol'n, for value it had none
For any but myself, I often wonder'd.
Thou hast not found it?

SOPHERA.

See! this I have found.
(*Giving her a picture, which she seizes eagerly.*)

COUNTESS.

Indeed, indeed it is!
(*After gazing mournfully on it.*)
Retire, I pray thee, nor, till morning break,
Return again, for I must be alone.
[*Exit* SOPHERA.
(*After gazing again on the picture.*)
Alas! that lip, that eye, that arching brow;
That thoughtful look which I have often mark'd,
So like my noble father! (*Kissing it.*)
This for his dear, dear sake, and this for thine:
Ye sleep i' the dust together. —
Alas! how sweetly mantled thus thy cheek
At sight of those thou lovedst! — What things
have been,
What hours, what years of trouble have gone
by,

Since thus in happy careless youth thou wert
Dearest and nearest to my simple heart.
(*Kisses it again, and presses it to her breast, while* GARCIO, *who has entered behind by a concealed door at the bottom of the stage, comes silently upon her, and she utters a scream of surprise.*)

GARCIO.

This is thy rest, then, and the quiet sleep
That should restore thy health: thou giv'st these hours
To the caressing of a minion's image
Which to a faithful husband are denied.
Oh, oh! they but on morning vapour tread,
Who ground their happiness on woman's faith.
Some reptile too! (*Stamping on the ground.*)
A paltry, worthless minion!

COUNTESS.

Ha! was it jealousy so much disturb'd thee?
If this be so, we shall be happy still.
The love I bear the dead, dear though it be,
Surely does thee no wrong.

GARCIO.

No, artful woman! give it to my hand.
(*Snatching at the picture.*)
That is the image of a living gallant.

COUNTESS.

O would it were! (*Gives it to him, and he,*

starting as he looks upon it, staggers back some paces, till he is arrested by the pillar of the bed, against which he leans in a kind of stupor, letting the picture fall from his hands.)

Merciful God! he 's guilty! — am I thus?
Heaven lend me strength! I'll be in doubt no longer. (*Running up to him, and clasping her hands together.*)
Garcio, a fearful thing is in my mind,
And curse me not that I have harbour'd it,
If that it be not so. — The wretched Baldwin,
Upon his deathbed, in his frenzied ravings,
Accused thee as the murderer of my brother:
O pardon me that such a monstrous tale
Had any power to move me! — Look upon me!
Say that thou didst it not, and I'll believe thee.
(*A pause.*)
Thou dost not speak. What fearful look is that?
That blanching cheek! that quiv'ring lip! — O horrible! (*Catching hold of his clothes.*)
Open thy lips! relieve me from this misery!
Say that thou didst not do it. (*He remains silent, making a rueful motion of the head.*)
O God! thou didst, thou didst! (*Holds up her hands to heaven in despair, and then, recoiling from him to a distant part of the chamber, stands gazing on him with horror.* GARCIO, *after great agitation, begins to approach her irresolutely.*)

I've shared thy love, been in thy bosom cherish'd,
But come not near me! touch me not! the earth
Yawning beneath my feet will shelter me
From thine accursed hand.

GARCIO.

O Margaret!
Can gentlest love to such fierce detestation
Be in an instant changed, for one sad deed,
The hasty act of a most horrid moment,
When hell and strong temptation master'd me?
And yet why marvel? for thou canst not more
Detest that deed than I, the wretched doer.

COUNTESS.

Ah, ah! why didst thou?

GARCIO.

Listen to my story.
But, oh! the while, unfasten from my face
Those looks of horror, else I cannot tell it.

COUNTESS.

Speak then, I hear thee.

GARCIO.

Thou know'st too well with what fierce pride Ulrico
Refused, on thy behalf, my suit of love;
Deeming a soldier, though of noble birth,
Ev'n his own blood, possessing but his arms
And some slight wreaths of fame, a match unmeet
For one whom lords of princely territory

Did strive to gain: — and here, indeed, I own
He rightly deem'd; my suit was most presumptuous.

COUNTESS.

Well, pass this o'er; — I know with too much pride
He did oppose thy suit.

GARCIO.

That night! It was in dreary, dull November,
When at the close of day, with faithful Baldwin,
I reach'd this castle with the vain intent
To make a last attempt to move his pity.
I made it, and I fail'd. With much contempt
And aggravating passion, he dismiss'd me
To the dark night.

COUNTESS.

You left him then? You left him?

GARCIO.

O yes! I left him. In my swelling breast
My proud blood boil'd. Through the wild wood I took
My darkling way. A violent storm arose;
The black dense clouds pour'd down their torrents on me;
The roaring winds aloft with the vex'd trees
Held strong contention, whilst my buffetted breast
The crushing tangled boughs and torn-up shrubs

Vainly opposed. Cross lay the wild'ring paths.
I miss'd the road; and after many turnings,
Seeing between the trees a steady light,
As from a window gleam, I hasten'd to it.
It was a lower window, and within,
The lighted chamber show'd me but too well,
We had unwittingly a circuit made
Back to the very walls from whence we came.

COUNTESS.

Ah, fated, fatal error! most perverse!

GARCIO.

But, oh! what feelings, think'st thou, rose within me?
What thoughts, what urging thoughts, what keen suggestions
Crowded upon me like a band of fiends,
When, on a nearer view, within the chamber,
Upon an open couch, alone and sleeping,
I saw Ulrico?

COUNTESS.

Didst thou slay him sleeping?
The horrible deed!—Thou could'st not! O thou could'st not!

GARCIO.

Well may'st thou say it! I've become, sweet Margaret,
Living, though most unworthy as I was,
Companion of thy virtues, one, whose heart

Has been to good affections form'd and bent;
But then it was not so. — My hapless youth
In bloody, savage, predatory war
Was rear'd. It was no shock to my rude childhood
To see whole bands of drunk or sleeping men
In cold blood butcher'd. Could I tell to thee
The things that I have seen: things, too, in which
My young hand took its part; thou would'st not wonder,
That, seeing thus my enemy in my power,
Love, fortune, honours, all within the purchase
Of one fell stroke, I raised my arm and gave it.

COUNTESS.

Fearful temptation!

GARCIO.

After a fearful pause, I softly enter'd.
The deed was done; and, hastening from the chamber
With breathless speed back to the spot where Baldwin
Held my brave steed, I mounted, favour'd now
By a new-risen moon and waning storm;
And to the fleetness of that noble creature
I owe it, that though heir to him I slew,
No whisper of suspicion upon me
E'er breath'd as perpetrator of the deed.

COUNTESS.

And I have been the while thy bosom's mate,
Pressing in plighted love the bloody hand
That slew my brother!

GARCIO.

Thou, indeed, hast been
An angel pure, link'd to a fiend. Yet, think not
I have enjoy'd what guilt so deep had earn'd.
Oh no! I've borne about, where'er I went,
A secret wretchedness within my breast
Turning delight to torment.—Now thou knowest
Why on my midnight couch thou'st heard me oft
Utter deep groans, when thou, waked from thy sleep,
Hast thought some nightmare press'd me.
Oh! were the deed undone, not all the diff'rence
Of sublunary bliss that lies between
A world's proud monarch and the lothliest wretch
That gleans subsistence from the fetid dunghill,
Would tempt me to embrue my hands in murder.
(*Speaking these last words loud and vehemently.*)

COUNTESS.

Hush! speak not thus! thou'lt be o'erheard: some list'ner
Is at the door. I thought I heard a noise. (*Going to the door, opening it, then shutting it softly and returning.*)
No; there is nothing: 't was my fears deceived me.

GARCIO.

And dost thou fear for me? Is there within thee
Still some remains of love for one so guilty?
Thou wilt not then, in utter detestation,
Heap curses on my head.

COUNTESS.

Guilty as thou hast been, I cannot curse thee.
O no! I'll nightly from my cloister'd cell
Send up to pitying Heaven my prayers for thee.

GARCIO.

Thy cloister'd cell! What mean those threat'ning words?

COUNTESS.

Garcio, we must part.

GARCIO.

No; never! Any punishment but this!
We shall not part.

COUNTESS.

We must, we must! 'T were monstrous, 't were unholy
Longer to live with thee.

GARCIO.

No, Margaret, no! Think'st thou I will indeed
Submit to this, ev'n cursed as I am?
No; were I black as hell's black fiends, and thou
Pure as celestial spirits (and so thou art),

Still thou art mine; my sworn, my wedded love,
And still as such I'll hold thee.

COUNTESS.

Heaven bids us part: yea, Nature bids us part.

GARCIO.

Heaven bids us part! Then let it send its lightning
To strike me from thy side. Let yawning earth,
Op'ning beneath my feet, divide us. Then,
And not till then, will I from thee be sever'd.

COUNTESS.

Let go thy terrible grasp: thou would'st not o'er me
A dreaded tyrant rule? Beneath thy power
Thou may'st indeed retain me, crush'd, degraded,
Watching in secret horror every glance
Of thy perturbed eye, like a quell'd slave,
If this suffice thee; but all ties of love —
All sympathy between us now is broken
And lost for ever.

GARCIO.

And canst thou be so ruthless? No, thou canst not!
Let Heaven in its just vengeance deal with me!
Let pain, remorse, disease, and every ill
Here in this world of nature be my portion!
And in the world of spirits too well I know
The murd'rer's doom abides me.

Is this too little for thy cruelty?
No; by the living God! on my curst head
Light every ill but this! We shall not part.

COUNTESS.

Let go thy desp'rate hold, thou desp'rate man!
Thou dost constrain me to an oath as dreadful;
And by that awful name ——

GARCIO.

Forbear, forbear!
Then it must be; there is no mitigation.

(*Throws himself on the ground, uttering a deep groan, when* ROVANI *and* SOPHERA *burst in upon them from opposite sides.*)

ROVANI (*to the* COUNTESS).

What is the matter? Hath he on himself
Done some rash act? I heard him loud and stormy.

SOPHERA.

She cannot answer thee: look to the Count,
And I will place her gently on her couch;
For they are both most wretched.

(SOPHERA *supports the* COUNTESS, *while* ROVANI *endeavours to raise* GARCIO *from the ground, and the scene closes.*)

SCENE III.

The Inside of a rustic Hermitage ; the Hermit *discovered marking a Figure on the Wall.*

HERMIT.

This day to all the lonely days here spent;
Making a term of thirty years' repentance
For forty years of sin. Heaven of its mercy
Accept the sacrifice! — Who knocks without?
(*Knocking at the door.*)
'T is nothing but my fancy. Break of day
Yet scarcely peeps, nor hath a new-waked bird
Chirp'd on my branchy roof. (*Knocking again.*)
Nay, something does.
Lift up the latch, whoe'er thou art; nor lock
Nor bar, nor any hind'rance e'er prevents
Those who would enter here.

Enter ROVANI.

ROVANI.

O pardon, holy Hermit, this intrusion
At such untimely hour; for misery
Makes free with times and seasons.

HERMIT.

Thou sayest well: it will d' off ceremony

Ev'n in a monarch's court.—Sit down, I pray:
I am myself a poor repentant sinner,
But, as I trust, a brand saved from the fire.
Then tell thy tale, and give thy sorrows vent:
What can I do for thee?

ROVANI.

I do not for myself entreat thy pity,
But I am come from an unhappy man,
Who, inly torn with agony of mind,
Hath need of ghostly aid.

HERMIT.

I am no priest.

ROVANI.

I know thou art not, but far better, Father,
For that which I entreat thee.
For the cowl'd monk, in peaceful cloisters bred,
Who hath for half a cent'ry undisturb'd
Told o'er his beads;—what sympathy hath he
For perturb'd souls, storm-toss'd i' the wicked world?
Therefore Count Garcio most desires to see thee,
And will to thee alone unlock his breast.

HERMIT.

Garcio, the lord of this domain?

ROVANI.

The same.

HERMIT.

The blest in love,—the rich, the prosp'rous
Garcio?

ROVANI.

He hath since dead of night traversed his chamber
Like one distraught, or cast him on the ground
In all the frantic violence of despair.
I have watch'd by him, but from thee alone
He will hear words of counsel or of peace.
Thy voice, perhaps, will calm a stormy spirit
That ne'er has known control.

HERMIT.

God grant it may!
We'll lose no time, my son; I follow thee.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*An Ante-room:* ROVANI *discovered pacing to and fro.*

ROVANI.

Their conference is long. The gentle Hermit
Has had, I fear, no easy task.—He comes!

Enter HERMIT.

Save thee, good Father! hath thy shriving sped?
How is thy penitent?

HERMIT.

Better, I hope: may Heaven preserve his mind
In the meek frame in which I left it. Never,
In all my intercourse with wretched sinners,
Have I with a more keen ungovern'd spirit
Stronger contention held.

ROVANI.

I well believe thee:
For I have seen ere now his spirit strive
In all the restless energy of passion.
Thou hast at last subdued him?

HERMIT.

Thank God, I have! Meek and resigned to Heaven
He now appears. But go to him, my son;
He needs thy presence much. Within an hour
He leaves the castle, — leaves his wife and child;
It is not fit that he should be alone.
Go, good Rovani, and with soothing words
Keep thou his resolution to the bent.

ROVANI.

Ah! such a resolution! Heard I right?
To leave his wife and child?

HERMIT.

Question me not, my son; there is good cause:
'T is meet that he should go.

ROVANI.

Forgive me, Father!
That solemn voice and sorrowing eye too well
Asserts there is a cause,—a fearful cause.
I will obey thee. (*Going, but returns again.*)
Is there aught further thou would'st have me do?

HERMIT.

He will, perhaps, desire to see his lady;
But till he be prepared to leave the castle,
And take his last farewell, methinks 't were better
They should not meet.

ROVANI.

I understand you, Father.
[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II.

The Apartment of the COUNTESS, *who is discovered sitting on a low seat, her elbows resting on her lap, and her face covered with her clasped hands. She raises her head suddenly, listens for a moment, and then springs from her seat.*

COUNTESS.

I am not now deceived. (*Goes to the door and listens, then returns.*) I heard his steps,—
Yea, and his voice,—and it was nothing. Ah!
My mind and senses so confused are grown,
That all this wretchedness seems like a dream;
A dream, alas! from which there is no waking.
I hear him now: it is a distant step:
I may be yet deceived. (*Going near the door, and listening again.*) It is, it is!
Heaven give me strength! my trial is at hand!

Enter GARCIO, *who approaches her, and then stopping short, gazes at her sadly, while she stands with her eyes fixed on the ground.*

GARCIO.

Marg'ret, I thought—I hoped—I was persuaded
The farewell yearnings of a broken heart
Would move thee to some pity of my state;

But that averted face, that downcast eye,—
There is abhorrence in it.

COUNTESS.

O no! I fear'd to look; 't is not abhorrence.
(*Raises her eyes to him, and shrinks back.*)

GARCIO.

What moves thee thus?

COUNTESS.

Alas! thou 'rt greatly alter'd:
So pale thy cheek, thine eyes so quench'd and sunk!
Hath one short night so changed thee?

GARCIO.

A night spent in the tossings of despair,
When the fierce turmoil of contending passions
To deepest self-abasement and contrition,
Subside; — a night in which I have consented
To tear my bosom up — to rend in twain
Its dearest, only ties; — ay, such a night
Works on the mortal frame the scathe of years.

COUNTESS.

Alas! thy frame will feel, I fear, too soon
The scathe of years. Sorrow and sickness then
Will bow thee down, while cold unkindly strangers
Neglect thy couch, nor give thee needful succour.

GARCIO.

And wherefore grieve for this? So much the better:
They least befriend the wretched who retard
The hour of his release. — Why should I live
If Heaven accept my penitence? Hath earth
Aught still to raise a wish, or gleam the path
Of one so darken'd round with misery?

COUNTESS.

Nay, say not so: thy child, thy boy, to see him
In strength and stature grown, — would not this tempt thee
To wish some years of life?

GARCIO.

Others shall rear him; others mark his change
From the sweet cherub to the playful boy;
Shall, with such pity as an orphan claims,
Share in his harmless sports and catch his love;
Whilst I, if that I live and am by Heaven
Permitted, coming as a way-worn stranger,
At distant intervals, to gaze upon him,
And strain him to my heart, shall from his eye
The cold and cheerless stare of wonderment
Instead of love receive.

COUNTESS.

O think not so! he shall be taught to love thee;
He shall be taught to lisp thy name, and raise
His little hands to Heaven for blessings on thee
As one most dear, though absent.

GARCIO.

I do believe that thou wilt teach him so.
I know that in my lonely state of penitence,
Sever'd from earthly bliss, I to thy mind
Shall be like one whom death hath purified.
O that, indeed, or death or any suff'rings,
By earthly frame or frameless spirit endured,
Could give me such a nature as again
Might be with thine united!
Could I but forward look and trust to this,
Whatever suff'rings of a lengthen'd life
Before me lay would be to me as nothing;
As the rough billows of some stormy frith,
Upon whose further shore fair regions smile;
As the rent shroudings of a murky cloud,
Thro' which the mountain traveller, as he bends
His mantled shoulders to the pelting storm,
Sees sunny brightness peer. Could I but think—

COUNTESS.

Think it! believe it! with a rooted faith,
Trust to it surely. Deep as thy repentance,
Aspiring be thy faith!

GARCIO.

Ay, were my faith
Strong as my penitence, 't were well indeed.
My scourge and bed of earth would then be temper'd
Almost to happiness.

COUNTESS.

Thy scourge and bed of earth! alas, alas!
And mean'st thou then to wreak upon thyself
Such cruel punishment? O no, my Garcio!
God doth accept the sorrow of the heart
Before all studied penance. 'T is not well:
Where'er thou art, live thou with worthy men,
And as becomes thy state.

GARCIO.

No; when from hence a banish'd man I go,
I'll leave behind me all my crime did purchase.
Deprived of thee, its first and dearest meed,
Shall I retain its base and paltry earnings
To live with strangers more regarded? No;
Poor as I was when first my luckless steps
This fatal threshold pass'd, — I will depart.

COUNTESS.

And wilt thou then a houseless wand'rer be?
Shall I, in warm robe wrapp'd, by winter fire
List to the pelting blast, and think the while
Of thy unshelter'd head?—
Or eat my bread in peace, and think that Garcio—
Reduce me not to such keen misery!
(*Bursting into an agony of tears.*)

GARCIO.

And dost thou still feel so much pity for me?
Retain I yet some portion of thy love?

O, if I do! I am not yet abandoned
To utter reprobation. (*Falling at her feet, and embracing her knees.*) Margaret! wife!
May I still call thee by that name so dear?

MARGARET (*disentangling herself from his hold, and removing to some distance*).

O, leave me, leave me! for Heaven's mercy leave me!

GARCIO (*following her, and bending one knee to the ground*).

Marg'ret, beloved wife! keenly beloved!

COUNTESS.

Oh, move me not! forbear, forbear in pity!
Fearful, and horrible, and dear thou art!
Both heaven and hell are in thee! Leave me then, —
Leave me to do that which is right and holy.

GARCIO.

Yes, what is right and holy thou shalt do;
Stain'd as I am with blood, — with kindred blood,
How could I live with thee? O do not think
I basely seek to move thee from thy purpose.
O, no! Farewell, most dear and honour'd Marg'ret!
Yet, ere I go, could'st thou without abhorrence —
(*Pauses.*)

COUNTESS.

What would'st thou, Garcio?

GARCIO.

If but that hand beloved were to my lips
Once more in parting press'd, methinks I'd go
With lighten'd misery.—Alas! thou canst not!
Thou canst not to such guilt ——

COUNTESS.

I can! I will!
And Heaven in mercy pardon me this sin,
If sin it be. (*Embraces him, and after weeping on his neck, breaks suddenly away and exit, while* GARCIO *stands gazing after her.*)

GARCIO.

Have I not seen my last?—I 've seen my last.
Then wherefore wait I here?—
The world before me lies,—a desert world
In which a banish'd wand'rer I must be.
(*A pause.*)
Wander from hence, and leave her so defenceless
In these unruly times! I cannot do it!
I'll seem to go, yet hover near her still,
Like spell-bound spirit near th' embalmed dust
It can no more reanimate. Mine eyes
May see her distant form, mine ears may hear
Her sweet voice through the air, while she believes
Kingdoms or seas divide us.

The Hermit is my friend, and I to him —
Rest for the present, eager crowding thoughts!
I must not linger here. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

An outer Court of the Castle; an arched Gateway in front with a stone Bench on one side of it.

Enter LUDOVIQUO, GAUVINO, *and* PIETRO, *and seat themselves on the bench.*

GAUVINO.

The ev'ning breeze will cool us better here.

LUDOVIQUO.

After the sultry day it is refreshing.

PIETRO (*to* GAUVINO).

Well, as I was a-saying to the seneschal,
I wonder that the Count should think of choosing
That noodle Gomez to attend upon him.

GAUVINO.

He has some reason for it, be assured.

LUDOVIQUO.

How so, good Chamberlain?

GAUVINO.

Heaven knows! but this fantastical Rovani,
Whom as his deputy he leaves behind,
Already takes upon him, by my faith!
As if his kingdom were to last for ever.

LUDOVIQUO.

Thou speak'st in spleen; he seems to me right gracious.

GAUVINO.

I say not in the way of tyranny
He takes upon him; 't is his very graciousness,
His condescending vanity I hate.
A vain, assuming coxcomb! Ev'n when Garcio
Frown'd like a master o'er us, yet my heart
Acknowledged him as such, and loved him oft
The better for his sternness.

LUDOVIQUO.

Didst thou? I'm sure full many a time and oft
Thou'st grumbled like a fiend, whene'er his orders,
Too roughly given, have cross'd thy wiser will.

GAUVINO.

Well, well; perhaps I have; yet, ne'ertheless,
Would he were with us still!

PIETRO.

Ay, would he were!

LUDOVIQUO.

Perhaps he'll soon return.

GAUVINO (*significantly*).

He'll ne'er return.—We'll see him here no more.

LUDOVIQUO.

Why say'st thou so?

GAUVINO.

I have my reasons: he hath been too prosperous.

PIETRO.

And what of that?

GAUVINO.

The power that has upheld him
Will, when his term is up, dire reck'ning take.

PIETRO.

What dost thou mean?

GAUVINO.

Nay, if thou canst not guess,
I will not utter more.

LUDOVIQUO.

Ha! yonder Gomez comes!

PIETRO.

Gomez, indeed! (*All rising to meet him.*)

LUDOVIQUO.

His Lord is then return'd.

Enter GOMEZ.

OMNES.

Return'd already, man! Where is thy master?

LUDOVIQUO.

Is he not with thee?

GOMEZ.

I would he were. I left him some leagues hence;
By his command charged to return again,
And follow him no more. Long I entreated
To be permitted still to share his fate,
But was at last constrain'd to leave him.

GAUVINO.

Ha!
Constrain'd! 't is very strange. Where didst thou leave him?

GOMEZ.

In the dark centre of a gloomy forest,
Dismounting, to my care he gave his steed,
And, as I said before, so strictly charged me,
I was constrain'd to leave him.

GAUVINO.

A dark forest?

LUDOVIQUO.

Saw'st thou where he went?

GOMEZ.

He turn'd away, and I with heavy cheer ——

GAUVINO (*very eagerly*).

Didst thou not look behind thee in retreating
To see what path he took?

GOMEZ.

I look'd behind,
But in a moment lost him from my sight.

GAUVINO (*shaking his head*).

'T is marvellous strange!
Was there not pit, nor cave, nor flood at hand?

GOMEZ.

Not that I noticed. Why dost shake thy head?

GAUVINO.

He'll never more upon this earth be seen.
Whether or cave, or gulf, or flood receiv'd him,
He is, ere this, I fear, beneath the earth
Full deep enough, reck'ning with him who bought
him.

PIETRO.

Reck'ning with him who bought him! Be there
then
Such fearful compacts with the wicked power?

GAUVINO.

Have ye not heard of John the Prosperous,
Who, starting at the sound of piping winds,
That burst his chamber door, full sore aghast,
With trembling steps his gorgeous chamber left,

And, by himself in a small boat embark'd,
Wearing his way to the black wheeling eddy
In centre of the lake, which swallow'd him?

PIETRO.

My flesh creeps at the thought?

GOMEZ.

Dost thou believe it?

GAUVINO.

Ay; or what think ye of the Count Avergo,
Who, after years of such successful crimes,
Took leave of all his friends, at warning given
By sound of midnight trumpet at his gate;
Round which, 't is said, a band of plumed spectres,
Whose whiten'd bony jaws and eyeless sockets
Did from their open'd beavers to the moon
Stare horribly, stood ready to receive him?

OMNES.

And went he with them?

GAUVINO.

Ay, certes, did he! for above the ground
With mortal men he never more was seen.
(*To* GOMEZ.) But enter, man, and have a stoup of wine;
Thou seemest faint and spent.

OMNES.

Ay, give him wine, for see how pale he is.

PIETRO.

Like one who hath been near unearthly things.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

The Garden.

Enter the COUNTESS *and* SOPHERA.

SOPHERA (*speaking as they enter*).

And look, I pray, how sweet and fresh and fragrant
The dewy morning is. There, o'er our heads
The birds conven'd like busy gossips sit,
Trimming their speckled feathers. In the thick
And tufted herbage, with a humming noise
Stirs many a new-waked thing; amongst the grass
Beetles, and lady-birds, and lizards glide,
Showing their shining coats like tinted gold.

COUNTESS.

Yes, all things, in a sunny morn like this,
That social being have and fellowship
With others of their kind, begin the day
Gladly and actively. Ah! how wakes he,
His day of lonesome silence to begin,
Who, of all social intercourse bereft,

On the cold earth hath pass'd the dismal night?
Cheerful domestic stir, nor crowing cock,
Nor greeting friend, nor fawning dog hath he
To give him his good-morrow.

SOPHERA.

Nay, do not let your fancy brood on this.
Think not my Lord, tho' he with Gomez parted
In a lone wood, will wander o'er the earth
In dreary solitude. In every country
Kind hearts are found to cheer the stranger's way.

COUNTESS.

Heaven grant he meet with such!

SOPHERA.

Then be not so cast down. Last night the air
Was still and pleasant; sweetly thro' the trees,
Which moved not, look'd the stars and crescent moon:
The night-bird's lengthen'd call with fitful lapse,
And the soft ceaseless sound of distant rills
Upon the list'ning ear came soothingly;
While the cool freshness of the air was mix'd
With rising odours from the flowery earth.
In such sweet summer nights, be well assured
The unhoused head sleeps soundest.

COUNTESS.

The unhoused head! and Garcio's now is such!
I could not sleep; and, as I paced my chamber,

Alas! thought I, how long a term is night
To lonely watchers! ev'n a summer's night.
And in the lengthen'd gloom of chill December——
Why dost thou move?

SOPHERA.

There is a stranger coming.

COUNTESS.

Perhaps it is some message from my lord.

SOPHERA.

I rather fear it is Tortona's lord.

COUNTESS.

I wish my gate had not been open'd to him.
Will he persist to press his presence on me?

Enter TORTONA.

TORTONA.

Pardon me, Madam, this too bold intrusion,
But hov'ring round your walls, like the poor moth
Circling the fatal flame, I needs must enter.
I was compell'd to do it. May I hope
I see you well as lovely, and inclined,
From the angelic sweetness of your nature,
To pardon me?

COUNTESS.

You still preserve, my Lord, I do perceive,

The bountiful profusion of a tongue
Well stored with courteous words.

TORTONA.

Nay, rather say,
A tongue that is of all expression beggar'd,
That can the inward sentiments declare
Which your angelic presence still inspires.
(*Pointing to* SOPHERA.) This lady knows how deep, how true they are.
She did refuse, yet, ne'ertheless, I trust
She bore my secret message to your ear.

SOPHERA.

'T was well for you I did not, good my Lord;
You had not else, I trow, found entrance here.

COUNTESS.

It had, in truth, prevented this presumption.
A secret message, saidst thou, for the ear
Of Garcio's wife!

TORTONA.

And does the man who quits thee,—
Like a dull dolt such heavenly beauty quits,—
Deserve the name of husband? No, sweet Marg'ret;
Gloze not to me thy secret wrongs: I know,
Full well I know them; nor shall formal names
And senseless ties my ardent love repel.
(*Catching hold of her hand.*)

COUNTESS (*shaking him off*).

Base and audacious fool! did not thy folly
Almost excuse thy crime, thou shouldst most dearly
Repent this insult. Thinkest thou my lord
Has left me unprotected?—Ho! Rovani!
Move with a quicker step.

Enter ROVANI, *followed by* GONZALOS.

(*To* TORTONA, *pointing to* ROVANI.) Behold, my Lord, the friend of absent Garcio,
And in his absence holder of this castle.
To his fair courtesy, as it is meet,
I now consign you with all due respect;
And so farewell. [*Exit, followed by* SOPHERA.

TORTONA.

I might, indeed, have known that modern dames
An absent husband's substitute can find
Right speedily.

ROVANI (*aside to* GONZALOS).

Jealous of me, I hear.
It makes my soldier's plume more proudly wave
To think such fancies twitch him.
(*Aloud to* TORTONA, *advancing to meet him.*)
Noble Marquis!
Proud of the lady's honourable charge,
Which to my care entrusts a guest so valued,
Let me entreat you to partake within

Some slight refreshment. After such fatigue,
So early and so gallantly encounter'd,
(Two leagues at least upon an ambling steed
Your morning's hardships fairly may be reckon'd,)
You must require refreshment.

TORTONA.

Paltry coxcomb!

ROVANI.

Yes, paltry as a coxcomb, good, my Lord,
Compared to greater. Pardon a deficiency
Your presence has occasion'd, and permit
That I conduct you ——

TORTONA.

Most contemptible!
Follow me not! My way from this curst place
I'll find without a guide.

ROVANI.

Then be it so,
If it so please you: and, farewell, my Lord,
Until within these walls you shall again
Vouchsafe to honour us.

TORTONA.

Which may be, jeering minion, somewhat sooner
Than thou dost reckon for.

ROVANI.

Whene'er you will, we're ready to receive you.

[*Exit* TORTONA.

He calls me minion: seest thou not, Gonzalos,

Which way suspicion leans? The fool is jealous,—
Jealous of me! Hath any one besides
Harbour'd such foolish fancies?

GONZALOS.

No, by St. Francis! ne'er a soul besides
Hath such a thought conceived, or ever will.

ROVANI.

Thou'rt angry: dost thou think my thoughts are evil?

GONZALOS.

No; evil thoughts thrive not within thy breast,
Valiant Rovani; this I know right well:
But vain ones there a fatt'ning culture find,
And reach a marv'llous growth.

ROVANI.

Well, do not chide: I will with scrup'lous honour
Fulfil my trust; and do but wish my arms
The lady and this castle might defend
Against a worthier foe than that light braggart.

GONZALOS.

But thou know'st well, or ought to know, Rovani,
A braggart may be brave. Faith! were it not
For some small grains of wit and honest worth
Which poor Tortona lacks, thyself and he
In natural temper'ment and spirit are
So nearly match'd, you might twin nestlings be
From the same shell.—Be not so rash, I pray!

Tortona is no coward; and his forces
Greater than thou in ruin'd walls like these
Canst prudently oppose: therefore be wise,
And send for timely aid, lest he surprise thee.

ROVANI.

I will be hang'd before another soldier
Shall be admitted here.

GONZALOS.

See to it then.

ROVANI.

And so I will; it is not thy concern.

[*Exit* GONZALOS.

ROVANI (*alone*).

He, too, 't is manifest, has some suspicion
That Marg'ret favours me. (*Muttering, and smiling to himself, then speaking aloud.*)
Ay, those same looks. Well, well, and if it be,
It touches not our honour.—Fair advice!
Call in some neighbouring leader of banditti
To share the honour of defending her!
I know his spite. Twin nestlings from the shell
With such a fool! I know his jealous spite.
I will be hang'd before another soldier
Shall cross the bridge or man our moated wall.

[*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I. — *The outer Court of the Castle.* Hermit, Pilgrim, *and several* Mendicants, *discovered standing round the Gateway at the bottom of the Stage.*

Enter, on the front, LUDOVIQUO, GAUVINO, *and* GOMEZ.

GAUVINO.

The rumour of our lady's bounteous alms
Spread o'er the country quickly; every morning
Adds to the number of those mendicants,—
Those slothful pests, who thus beset our gates.

LUDOVIQUO.

Rail not so bitterly; there are, thou seest,
The sick and maim'd and truly miserable,
Although some idle vagrants with the crowd
Have enter'd cunningly. Dost thou not see
Our Hermit is amongst them?

GAUVINO.

What, comes he too a-begging? Shame upon him!
His cot is stored with every dainty thing
Our peasant housewives rear, poor simple souls!
And prowls he here for more?

GOMEZ.

He never came before.

LUDOVIQUO.

Ay, and belike
He rather comes to give than to receive.

GAUVINO.

And what hath he to give? God mend thy wit!
A broken rosary?

LUDOVIQUO.

A good man's blessing.

GAUVINO.

Poo, poo! what folks are wont to sell at home,
They will not go abroad to give for nothing.

GOMEZ.

And see yon aged Pilgrim by his side,
How spent and spare he seems!

GAUVINO.

Hovels, and caves, and lazar-houses soon
Will pour their pests upon us.

LUDOVIQUO.

Hush, man! thou art a surly heartless churl!
Yonder the lady comes.

Enter COUNTESS.

MENDICANTS (*advancing, and all speaking at once as she enters.*)

Blessings upon your head, most noble Lady!

COUNTESS.

I thank you all! Have they been careful of you?

MENDICANTS.

Ay, bless you! they have served us bountifully.

COUNTESS.

But wherefore stand ye here? Retire within,
Where ye may sit at ease and eat your morsel.
Good Pilgrim, thou art weary, and lack'st rest;
I fear the hardships of thy wand'ring life
Have blanch'd thy scanty locks more than thine years.

PILGRIM.

No, gentle Lady: Heaven provides for me.
When ev'ning closes, still some shelt'ring cave,
Or peasant's cot, or goatherd's shed is near;
And, should the night in desert parts o'ertake me,
It pleases me to think the beating blast
Has its commission, by rough discipline
To profit me withal.

COUNTESS.

The beating blasts have well fulfill'd on thee
Their high commission.
But, oh! exceed not! Wander forth no more.
If thou hast home, or wife, or child, or aught
Of human kind that loves thee, O return!
Return to them, and end thy days in peace.
Didst thou but know the misery of those

Who hear the night-blast rock their walls, and think
The head to them most dear may be unshelter'd,
Thou couldst not be so cruel——
(*Turning round.*) Who 'twitch'd my robe?

LUDOVIQUO.

It was our holy Hermit,
Who press'd, ev'n now, its border to his lips,
Then shrunk aside.

COUNTESS.

But how is this? He hurries fast away.

LUDOVIQUO.

He is a bashful man, whose hooded face
On woman never looks.

COUNTESS.

Has he some vow upon him?

LUDOVIQUO.

'T is like he may; but he will pray for you.

COUNTESS.

And good men's prayers prevail, I do believe.

LUDOVIQUO.

Ay, Madam, all the peasants round, I trow,
Set by his prayers great store. Ev'n mothers leave
The very cradles of their dying infants
To beg them. Wives, whose husbands are at sea,

Or absent, or in any jeopardy,
Hie to his cell to crave his intercession.

COUNTESS.

Do they? Most blessed man! —
(*Beckoning to the* Hermit, *who stands aloof.*)
I have words for thine ear; approach, I pray.
(*Leading him apart, on the front of the Stage.*)
The absent and in jeopardy by thee
Remember'd are, and Heaven receives thy prayers:
Then, oh! remember one, who for himself,
Depress'd, discouraged, may not to God's throne
Meet supplication make!
(*Taking him further apart, and in a lower voice.*)
There is a lonely wand'rer in the world
Of whom thou wottest. When the vespers sweet
And ev'ning orisons of holy men
Sound through the air, and in his humble cot,
With all his family round, th' unlearned hind
Lifts up his soul to Heaven; when ev'n the babe,
Tutor'd to goodness, by its mother kneels
To lisp some holy word,— on the cold ground,
Uncheer'd of earthly thing, he 'll lay him down
Unblest, I fear, and silent. Such a one
Thou wottest of, good Father; pray for him.—
How's this? thou 'rt greatly moved, and dost not answer.
Have I requested what thou may'st not grant?

Heaven hath not cast him off. O do not think
it!
The heart that loved him hath not cast him off,
And do not thou. Pray for him: God will hear
thee.
(*He retires from her; she still following him.*)
I do entreat, I do beseech thee, Father!
I saw thy big tears glancing as they fell,
Though shrouded be thy face. Wilt thou not
speak?

HERMIT (*in a disguised voice*).

I will obey thee, Lady.

COUNTESS (*to herself*).

He hath a strange, mistuned, and hollow voice,
For one of so much sympathy.
(*Alarm bell without.*)
Ha! the alarm! What may it be? Ho! Pietro.

Enter PIETRO, *in haste.*

PIETRO.

Haste, shut the castle gates, and with all speed
Muster our strength, — there is no time to lose.
Madam, give orders quickly. Where's Rovani?

COUNTESS.

What is the matter? Why this loud alarm?

PIETRO.

The Marquis of Tortona, not far distant,

With hasty march approaches, as I guess
Three thousand strong.

(*Alarm rings again, and enter* ROVANI, GONZALOS *and others, from different sides*).

COUNTESS.

Heaven be our trust!—Hearest thou this, Rovani?

ROVANI.

I've heard the larum bell and strange confusion.

COUNTESS.

Tortona with his hostile force approaches——
(*To* PIETRO.) Tell it thyself; saidst thou three thousand strong?

PIETRO.

Yes, Madam, so I did compute his numbers;
And with him, too, one of those horrid engines
So lately known, which from its roaring mouth
Sends horrible destruction.—
Not two leagues off I met him in array
Skirting the forest; and through dell and stream,
Fast as my feet could bear me, I have run
To give you notice.

COUNTESS.

Heaven aid the weak! I fear our slender force
Will be as nothing 'gainst such fearful odds.
What thinkest thou, Rovani? for on thee
Our fate depends.

ROVANI.

Fear not, my noble Mistress!
I will defend you. In your service bold,
Each of your men will ten men's strength possess.
Withdraw then, I entreat you, to your tower,
And these good folks dismiss.
(*Pointing to the* Mendicants *that still remain.*)
[*Exeunt* COUNTESS *and all the* Mendicants *except the* Hermit, *who retires to a corner of the Stage.*

GONZALOS (*advancing to* ROVANI *on the front*).

Rovani, be thou bold, yet be not rash.
I warn'd thee well of this; but let that pass:
Only be wiser now. There is a leader
Of bold condotieri, not far distant,
Send to him instantly: there may be time.

ROVANI.

I will not: we can well defend these walls
'Gainst greater odds; and I could swear that coward
Has number'd, in his fright, Tortona's soldiers
Threefold beyond the truth. Go to thy duty:
Muster the men within, while I, meantime,
From place to place all needful orders give.
[*Exeunt* GONZALOS *and* ROVANI *severally, while many people cross the Stage in hurry and confusion,* ROVANI *calling to them sometimes on one side, sometimes on another, as he goes off.*

GOMEZ (*to* LUDOVIQUO, *following* ROVANI *with his eye*).

A brave man this, and gives his orders promptly.

LUDOVIQUO.

Ay; brave enough, but rash. Alack the day!
Would that our valiant lord were here himself,
His own fair dame and castle to defend.
Alas! that evil deed ere stain'd his hand, —
If this was so: we'll see his like no more.

HERMIT (*going close to* LUDOVIQUO).

Fear not, good man, who lov'st thy hapless Lord;
Give me thine ear. (*Whispers to him.*)

LUDOVIQUO (*aside to* Hermit).

Conceal thee in that tower.

HERMIT.

Hush, hush! and come with me: I will convince thee
That what I ask is for thy lady's good.

[*Exeunt* Hermit, *leading off* LUDOVIQUO *from* GOMEZ.

SCENE II.

The Great Hall of the Castle.

Enter the COUNTESS, *meeting* SOPHERA; *a confused noise heard without, and a discharge of cannon.*

COUNTESS.

What saw'st thou from the turrets, for thy face
Looks pale and terrified? The din increases;
They have not made a breach?

SOPHERA.

I hope they have not; but that fearful engine
Is now against our weakest buttress pointed.
(*Cannon heard again.*)
It roars again; have mercy on us, Heaven!
How the walls shake, as if an earthquake rock'd
them!

COUNTESS.

My child, my child! I'll to the lowest vaults
Convey him instantly.

SOPHERA.

But you forget th' attack is still directed
Against the eastern side; here he is safe.

COUNTESS.

And may th' Almighty ever keep him so!
(*Cannon without.*)

SOPHERA.

Again the horrible roar!

COUNTESS.

Our ruin'd walls are weak, our warriors few:
Should they effect a breach!—O Garcio, Garcio!
Where wand'rest thou, unblest, unhappy man,
Who hadst our safeguard been!

Enter PIETRO.

Ha! bring'st thou tidings?

PIETRO.

Ay, and fearful tidings.
The foe have made a breach, and thro' the moat,
Now grown so shallow with the summer drought,
Have made their way.

COUNTESS.

Where does Rovani fight?

PIETRO.

He did fight in the breach most valiantly;
But now the foemen o'er his body pass,
For he is slain, and all, I fear, is lost.

COUNTESS.

It must not be: I'll to the walls myself;
My soldiers will with desperate courage fight,
When they behold their wretched mistress near.

SOPHERA (*endeavouring to prevent her*).

O, Madam, do not go!
Alas, alas! our miserable fate!

COUNTESS.

Restrain me not with senseless lamentations;
Driven to this desp'rate state, what is my choice?
For now I must be bold, or despicable.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

The Ramparts: Women *discovered looking down from one of the lower Battlements of the Castle; the din and clashing of Arms heard without, as if close at hand; then* TORTONA *and his Soldiers cross the Stage, fighting with the Soldiers of the Castle.*

FIRST WOMAN.

See, there! see how our noble lady stands,
And bravely cheers them!

SECOND WOMAN.

If they have any soul or manhood in them,
They'll fight like raging lions for her sake.

GONZALOS (*without*).

Fie, fie! give way before your lady's eyes!

FIRST WOMAN.

Ay, brave Gonzalos, there right nobly strives;

But all in vain, — the enemy advance;
They gain the pass, and our base varlets yield.

(*Voice without.*)

Bear in the lady there; 't is desperation!

(*Second Voice without.*)

Resistance now is vain; bear in the lady!

(*Third Voice without.*)

A miracle! a miracle!

FIRST WOMAN.

What is 't? Why call they out a miracle?

SECOND WOMAN.

Hast thou not eyes to see? Upon our side
The Hermit combats, coiling round one arm
His twisted garments, whilst the other wields
A monst'rous brand, might grace a giant's grasp.
O brave! look how he fights! he doth not fight
Like mortal man: Heaven sends him to our aid.

FIRST WOMAN.

And see! there is another miracle!
See Ludoviquo fighting by his side!
Who could have thought our gentle seneschal
Had pith and soul enough to fight so bravely?

SECOND WOMAN.

See, see! the vile Tortonians stand aghast:
They turn, they fly!

(*Loud shouts heard without, and re-enter* TORTONA *and his party, pursued by the Soldiers of the castle, led on by the* Hermit.)

HERMIT.

Turn, valiant chieftain! the most gen'rous foe
Of dames, whose lords are absent; turn, for shame!
Do not disgrace thy noble enterprise
With wounds received behind. Whate'er their cause,
Tortona's lords have still been soldiers. Turn,
Or be the scorn of every beardless boy,
Whose heart beats at the sound of warlike coil.
Thou canst not fear a man unhelm'd, unmail'd?

TORTONA.

No; if a man thou art, I fear thee not!

HERMIT.

Well, to it, then, and prove me flesh and blood.

TORTONA.

Whate'er thou art, I'll bear thy scorn no longer.

[*Exeunt, fighting furiously.*

SCENE IV.

The great Hall: a shouting heard without.

Enter PIETRO, *calling as he enters.*

PIETRO.

Where is the Countess?

Enter SOPHERA, *by the opposite side.*

SOPHERA.

Thy voice calls gladly; dost thou bring good tidings?

PIETRO.

I do; but stop me not! Where is the Countess?

Enter COUNTESS *in haste.*

COUNTESS.

What joyful shouts were those? My soldiers' voices!
Some happy chance has changed the fate of battle.

PIETRO.

Ay, changed most happily.

COUNTESS.

And Heaven be praised!
How has it been, good Pietro? Tell me quickly.

PIETRO.

When we were panic-struck, reft of our wits,
Treading, like senseless sheep, each other down,
Heaven sent us aid.

COUNTESS.

And be its goodness praised!
So near the verge of merciless destruction,
What blessed aid was sent?

PIETRO.

By our fierce enemy, as I have said,
So sorely press'd, a powerful voice was heard
Calling our courage back; and on the sudden,
As if the yawning earth had sent it up,
A noble form, clad in the Hermit's weeds,
But fighting with such fury irresistible
As armed warrior, no, nor mortal man
Did ever fight, upon our side appear'd,
Inspiring us with valour. Instantly
We turn'd again on our astonish'd foe,
Who fled to gain the breach by which they enter'd.
Few have escaped; and by our noble Hermit
Tortona's lord is slain.

COUNTESS (*after looking up to heaven in silent adoration*).

That mighty Arm which still protects the innocent,
Weak woman, helpless infancy, and all

Bereft and desolate, hath fought for us!
But he, the blessed agent of its power,
Our brave deliv'rer, lead me to him instantly!
Where is the marv'llous man?

PIETRO.

I left him, Madam, on the eastern rampart,
Just as Tortona fell.—See Ludoviquo,
Who still fought nearest to him; he'll inform
you.

Enter LUDOVIQUO.

COUNTESS.

Brave Ludoviquo!—But that woeful look,
In such a moment of unhoped-for triumph!
Is the brave being safe who hath preserved us?

LUDOVIQUO.

Alas! e'en as we shouted at the fall
Of proud Tortona, conquer'd by his arm;
E'en as he stoop'd to sooth his dying foe,
The hateful catiff drew a hidden dagger
And plunged it in his breast.

COUNTESS.

Alas, alas! and is his life the forfeit
Of his most gen'rous aid!
O lead me to him! let me thank and bless him,
If yet his noble mind be sensible
To words of gratitude.

LUDOVIQUO.

They bring him hither. He himself desired
That they should bear him to your presence. See!
With sad slow steps they come.

Enter Soldiers bearing the Hermit *on a low bier, and set him down near the front of the Stage. The* COUNTESS *stands in woeful silence till he is placed, then throws herself at his feet, embracing them.*

COUNTESS.

Devoted, generous man! Heaven's blessed minister!
Who hast, to save us from impending ruin,
Thy life so nobly sacrificed; receive, —
While yet thy soul hath taste of earthly things, —
Receive my thanks, my tears, my love, my blessing;
The yearning admiration of a heart
Most grateful! Generous man, whoe'er thou art,
Thy deeds have made thee blood and kindred to me.
O that my prayers and tears could move thy God,
Who sent such aid, to spare thy precious life!

HERMIT (*uncovering his head, and discovering the face of* GARCIO).

Margaret!

COUNTESS.

My Garcio! (*Throwing her arms round him for some time, then raising herself from the bier, and wringing her hands in an agony of grief.*)

This is my wretched work! Heaven was his judge,
Yet I, with cruel unrelenting sternness,
Have push'd him on his fate. O Garcio, Garcio!

GARCIO.

Do not upbraid thyself: thou hast done well;
For no repentance e'er could make me worthy
To live with thee, though it has made me worthy
To die for thee.

COUNTESS.

My dear and generous Garcio!
Alas, alas!

GARCIO.

O calm that frantic grief!
For had my life been spared, my dearest Margaret,
A wand'ring banish'd wretch I must have been,
Lonely and sad: but now, forgiven by thee,—
For so my heart assures me that I am,—
To breathe my parting spirit in thy presence,
For one who has so heavily offended,
Is a most happy end. It is so happy
That I have faith to think my deep contrition

Is by my God and Judge accepted now,
Instead of years of wretchedness and penance.
Be satisfied and cheer'd, my dearest wife!
Heaven deals with me in mercy.
Where is thy hand? Farewell, a long farewell!

SOPHERA.

See, he revives, and strives to speak again.

GARCIO.

Could I but live till I have seen my child!
It may not be: the gripe of death is here.
Give him my dying love. *(Dies.)*

[*Curtain drops.*

THE

STRIPLING:

A TRAGEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.

WRITTEN IN PROSE.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Play was written when Master Betty, known by the name of the Young Roscius, was in the highest favour with the public, and before I had seen him perform; but, upon after consideration, was not offered to the theatre. It appears to me, in reading it again, after a long lapse of years, to be a Play not ill suited to a very young actor, at the beginning of his career; being in prose, and having, I hope, no false, overstrained passion in it, to mislead him into ranting or exaggerated expression, either as to gesture, voice, or face.

Were there more characters of simple nature, adapted to young actors, to be found in our dramatic stores, they would not at first acquire those bad habits which so often prevent their after excellence. And the public would, in this early stage of their progress, receive from them a rational entertainment; for, surely, to see a boy assuming the warlike air and tormenting jealousy of Othello, or the delicate and complicated feelings of the Prince of Denmark, scarcely deserves that name.

The story of the Play is in some measure taken from a melancholy event which took place many years ago in Glasgow, yet still within the recollection of some of its present inhabitants. A young man, whose father was in prison, and about to be tried for a capital offence,—his fate depending on the single evidence of one person, which it was believed must prove fatal,—fired through a window at night, and killed the dreaded witness. The father's life was by this means spared, and the son was executed for the criminal act, though it was perpetrated from the strongest feeling of filial affection, being himself in no degree implicated in the guilt of his father.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN.

ARDEN.
YOUNG ARDEN.
ROBINAIR.
BRUTON.
HUMPHRY, *an old Servant in the Family of Arden.*
MORGAN, } *Servants.*
ROBERT, }
Gaolers, Servants, Countrymen, *&c.*

WOMEN.

MRS. ARDEN.
MADALINE.

Scene, in London and the Vicinity.

THE STRIPLING.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — ARDEN's *House;* MRS. ARDEN *discovered in a disconsolate posture, with* MADALINE *hanging over her soothingly.*

MADALINE.

BE not so overcome, my dear cousin; he has friends who will exert all their interest on his behalf.

MRS. ARDEN.

Ay, ay! thou talkest like a child who believes every one as sincere and affectionate as herself. Who are they who interest themselves for the unfortunate? They who have daily conversed with him, laughed with him, gamed with him? who have daily quaffed wine at his table, and repeated every pleasantry that fell from his lips? (*Shaking her head with an expression of bitter contempt.*) My husband had many such friends!

MADALINE.

But you think too hardly of mankind: some one, even amongst them, will be found to stand up in his defence now in his hour of need. Robinair, for instance; he will bestir himself vigorously. He is in credit with people in power: he has always been warm in his expressions of friendship, I may say of admiration, for Mr. Arden. He will find means to influence them in his favour.

MRS. ARDEN.

Alas, alas! does our hope hang on this point? I fear, indeed, that he has too much committed himself to this man: he hinted to me something of the kind, which, more than any other unfavourable circumstance, makes me tremble.

MADALINE.

Why, how is this? I thought Robinair had been *your* friend, too. I have always understood, though I was then too young to be admitted into your confidence, that he was attached to you before you married. And has he not, ever since his return from abroad, befriended your husband in all the embarrassments into which his imprudence has thrown him?

MRS. ARDEN.

Rather say that, in the bitterness of disappoint-

ment, he has haunted us like a malevolent spirit, to enjoy our misfortunes and distress.

MADALINE.

Can he be so wicked?

MRS. ARDEN.

Without being able directly to accuse him of one unfriendly office, something within my breast has always whispered this to me. But Arden, my poor Arden, thought otherwise; and it was the only thing that ever caused disagreement between us. I enjoyed the confidence of my husband till he became so intimate with him, and from that time I have been kept in the dark regarding all his schemes and transactions. Judge, then, with what heart I shall put my trust in Robinair!

MADALINE.

Try him, however: put his friendship to the proof.

MRS. ARDEN.

I mean to do so, Madaline: I have already sent to him, and expect him every moment. (*Listening.*) Is there not somebody coming?—A heavy footstep—his step! Now must I hold down this proud heart within me, and be supplicant to him whom I despise.

Enter BRUTON.

Mr. Bruton! I expected, Sir, to have seen your friend.

BRUTON.

Unavoidable business, Madam, prevents Mr. Robinair from waiting upon you: he cannot possibly come to this part of the town to-day; but he will be happy to have the honour of receiving you, at his own house, any hour in the forenoon which you may be pleased to appoint.

MRS. ARDEN.

He says so? (*A pause.*) I ought not to be surprised at this message.—I shall wait upon him at half-past twelve. Perhaps I shall find more generosity in his nature than this message, or the misgivings of my own heart, seem to promise. (*Looking earnestly at* BRUTON.) You are silent, Mr. Bruton: you make no rash promises for your friend.

BRUTON.

I hope, Madam, you will not be disappointed in any good opinion you may form of him. I hope he will make every exertion in favour of Mr. Arden; but, in cases of this nature, all applications to royal benevolence, unless under very peculiar circumstances, have proved unsuccessful.

MRS. ARDEN.

Alas! I know that forgery is a crime which, in a commercial country, is rigorously dealt with; and if Arden is once condemned, notwithstanding his innocence, I shall be hopeless. It is the services of a friend regarding the evidence to be produced upon his trial that I would solicit from Mr. Robinair. No one is so capable as himself of rendering them effectually.

BRUTON.

He is, indeed, active, sagacious, and acute. (*Muttering words indistinctly.*)

MRS. ARDEN.

Yes, he has all the qualities you have named. —Half-past twelve, then, you think he will be at leisure?

BRUTON.

Yes, Madam: good morning. (*Going.*)

MRS. ARDEN.

Mr. Bruton! (*Calling after him.*)

BRUTON.

Did you call me, Madam?

MRS. ARDEN.

I beg pardon — there is nothing: good morning.

BRUTON.

Good morning, Lady. (*Going as before, till almost off the Stage.*)

MRS. ARDEN (*stepping after him hastily*).

Mr. Bruton! forgive this irresolute weakness: I did call you. Oh, Sir! the wretched hope for succour where no claims exist,—even from the stranger and the unknown; and think that every look of pity comes from one who would befriend them. There was an expression on your face as you went; have I read it truly? Will you use your influence with Robinair for the unhappy? Although, I acknowledge, the sentiments I have felt and, perhaps, too strongly expressed for all those who, with Robinair, seemed engaged in drawing my husband into expensive and dangerous habits, do not entitle me to ask any favour of *you*.

BRUTON.

Be assured, Madam, no remembrance of such expressions shall rest upon my mind at present; and if it is possible to be of any use to you, I will. Would to God I could serve you!

MRS. ARDEN.

You can — you can! You can move him.

BRUTON.

Move him!— I will try to do it; but, if he is

to be moved, who can do it so powerfully as yourself? My best wishes are on your side.

[*Exit.*

MRS. ARDEN.

"Move him!" — "if he is to be moved!" Didst thou mark with what a voice he uttered those words?

MADALINE.

Nay, do not despair.

MRS. ARDEN.

He knows the man. Oh, my unfortunate husband! And my son — my boy, my pride — must thou be the son of a condemned —— (*Bursting into tears.*)

MADALINE.

Do not bewail yourself thus, as if the worst had already befallen you. The storm will pass: the innocent will never be condemned, how strong soever the circumstances may be which make him at present suspected. And for your son, so far distant at school, he will know nothing of this terrible distress. How fortunate it is, poor boy, that he is absent! His affectionate and sensible heart would ill support itself against the dreadful shock.

MRS. ARDEN.

Alas, poor fellow! he is conning over his daily tasks, and sporting with his careless play-

mates, and little dreams of the misery at home. O that he may never know it! Thank Heaven, however, that he is at present removed from it.

MADALINE.

It is one fortunate circumstance amidst your many distresses. Do not suffer yourself to be so depressed; wrestle more bravely with your misfortunes, and Heaven will support and protect you.

MRS. ARDEN.

I will try to do so.

MADALINE.

This is well said: and, if I might advise you, retire for an hour to your chamber, and, if possible, take a little rest. You have been up the whole night, and it is still early in the morning. You will not else have strength to comfort him who so much wants your comfort.

MRS. ARDEN.

I thank you, my kind Madaline; I will do as you desire me, though nowhere is there any rest for me.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

An Ante-room.

Enter HUMPHRY *and* ROBERT, *meeting.*

ROBERT.

Art thou from the prison, Humphry?

HUMPHRY.

Yes.

ROBERT.

Hast thou seen our Master?

HUMPHRY.

Yes.

ROBERT.

Is he on the felon's side?

HUMPHRY (*angrily*).

Yes.

ROBERT.

Be there irons upon his legs?

HUMPHRY (*pushing him away*).

No, beast; but I wish there were upon thy tongue.

ROBERT.

What makes you growl so at a body? Is there any harm in axing a question or two? for I wants hugely to know how he looks, and how he demeans himself upon it.

HUMPHRY.

He demeans himself like a man; and how he looks, those may say who have courage enough to look at him. I saw no part of him higher than his waist.

ROBERT.

Ah, poor gentleman! he was a good master to us, I must say that for him; and had it not been for those sharking fellows hanging about him so, eating up his substance through the day, and leading him to the gaming-house at night, he would have remained so, living in credit and honesty. His lady, poor woman! my heart grieves for her; and that fine lad, our young master, what will become of him?

HUMPHRY.

Ay, generous boy! kindly boy! noble boy! it will pull hard at his high spirit, I warrant ye. He will be fifteen next Monday; and what a joyless birthday it will be!

ROBERT.

Yes, man: he is so courteous and so gentle with us here; and yet they say at school, amongst

his playfellows, he is the master boy of them all, and reigns over them as bravely as any prince.

HUMPHRY.

Ay; woe is me for him!

ROBERT.

It is well, howsomever, that he knows nothing of it at present. Evil comes soon enough, God wot.

HUMPHRY.

Is my lady in her chamber?

ROBERT.

I thought I heard a noise as if she were. (*Both draw close to the side scene to listen.*) They told me she was gone to lay down; but she may be stirring now.

Enter YOUNG ARDEN *by the opposite side.*

YOUNG ARDEN (*aside*).

Ha! there's old Humphry and Robert confabbing together. I am taller since I left home, and they have never seen me in a coat of this fashion: I think I may play them a trick. (*Pulling his hat over his eyes, and speaking in a feigned voice.*) Pray, ye good Sirs, is young Mr. Arden at home?

HUMPHRY.

No, Sir; have you any business with him? He's at school.

YOUNG ARDEN.

And he had better stay there, I trow, if he has not a mind for as sound a beating as ever fell to the share of a sorry jackanapes.

HUMPHRY.

Sorry jackanapes, Sir! There is not a braver boy in the kingdom. He would think no more of chucking such a sneaking fellow as you into the kennel than I should of twisting round this junk of tobacco.

YOUNG ARDEN.

Yes, to be sure, it becomes you to speak well of him, for the honour of the house you are in; but you know well enough that he is but a paltry fellow, who runs about the house and calls out "O dear!" if his finger be but scratched, that every body may pity him.

HUMPHRY.

He is ready enough to pity any body; but scratch his own finger to the bone, ay, cut off his leg, an you please, and the devil himself will not make him call out "O dear!"

YOUNG ARDEN (*casting away his hat, skipping across the room, and throwing his arms round* HUMPHRY*'s neck*).

My dear Humphry! my kind old Humphry! thou lovest me as much as ever, I see; and I

might ride on thy shoulders still, were I not somewhat heavier now, and thou scarcely so strong. We have had happy days together, Humphry! and we'll have them again, though after a different fashion.

HUMPHRY.

Ah, my dear child! what has brought you here?

YOUNG ARDEN.

Our school has broke up suddenly, on account of a fever that has got into it. I thought I should come upon you by surprise. But how is this? You look strangely upon me.—And you too, Robert: are you not glad to see me? (*A pause.*) What is the matter? Is my father within?

HUMPHRY (*making signs for* ROBERT *to be silent*).

No, he is not within—or, rather, he is not at home—or, that is to say, he has left his own house for a little time.

YOUNG ARDEN.

And my mother, is she well?

HUMPHRY.

Pretty well—so so.

YOUNG ARDEN.

So so! Where is she?

HUMPHRY.

Taking a short rest, I believe, in her own

room. (*Preventing* YOUNG ARDEN, *who is hastening towards the door.*) Nay! let her rest a little while before you go to her; and wait meantime in the library, where you will have books to amuse you.

YOUNG ARDEN.

Be it so, then; but I cannot wait long. I want only to look upon her, but not to wake or disturb her.

[*Exit.*

HUMPHRY.

How tall he has grown! he has the size of a man, and I'm sure he had always the spirit of one. Oh, how it will be put to the proof!

ROBERT.

It makes a body quake to think of it. His own father to die the death of a ——

HUMPHRY.

I'll throttle thee if thou say another word about that!

ROBERT.

Lord 'a mercy! one may not speak to you now about any thing that one cares most to speak about.

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE III.

MRS. ARDEN's *Bed-chamber. She is discovered lying on a couch, as if asleep, with a shawl thrown over her face.*

Enter YOUNG ARDEN, *stepping softly on tiptoe.*

YOUNG ARDEN.

Is she asleep? Her breast heaves under that covering, as if she slept soundly. (*Going up to her.*) All covered up so closely! Ha! here is a hand peeping out which I will press by and by right dearly. (*Kneels, and bends over her hand, mimicking the action of kissing, but without touching it.*) I can see her features, too, through these folds. (*Putting his face close to hers, affectionately.*) How surprised she will be when she wakes, and sees me by her! Does she not move? She is awake. (*Lifting the shawl gently from her face.*) Mother! my little dormouse mother!

MRS. ARDEN (*shrieking, and starting up*).

Good God! art thou here, Edmond? Why art thou come? What brings thee? Hast thou heard any thing?

YOUNG ARDEN.

Heard any thing? What should I hear? Has

any thing happened? Where is my father? They tell me he has gone from home for a short time: where is he gone?

MRS. ARDEN.

Yes, yes; he is gone from home. This house is not his home at present. (*Bursting into tears and falling on his neck*).

YOUNG ARDEN.

My dearest mother! why this excess of grief? Where is he gone to? For God's sake! where is he gone to?

MRS. ARDEN.

He is gone — they have put him — he is gone ——

YOUNG ARDEN.

To prison?

MRS. ARDEN.

Even so, boy! thou hast guessed it. But, oh, think not hardly of him! He has been misled; he has been imprudent.

YOUNG ARDEN.

Think hardly of him, mother! I would not think hardly of him, though I were turned to the streets for his sake, and left to beg my bread from door to door.

MRS. ARDEN.

Oh, my child! what hast thou to go through!

YOUNG ARDEN.

Think not of me, dear mother; I can go through it all with a good heart. — But what will become of you till I am old enough to work for you?—Fie on't! I am old enough now: I am sound of life and limb, and I have spirit enough to face anything.

MRS. ARDEN.

Alas, alas for thee!

YOUNG ARDEN.

Fear not, fear not. I am a proud boy, it is true; but I will not be ashamed before any one when I am working for my mother.

MRS. ARDEN.

My blessed child! and must this be thy portion?

YOUNG ARDEN.

Yes, Madam, and an honourable one too. Cheer up, cheer up, my dear mother. I shall go to my father presently, and meet him with such a cheerful countenance, that he shall only wait for a discharge from his creditors, which they cannot refuse when he has given up all that he has, — to be a far happier man than he was before.

MRS. ARDEN.

Oh! oh! thou little thinkest what thou hast before thee!

YOUNG ARDEN.

Nay, say not "Oh! oh!" I have looked forward to this for some time, and have hardened myself to meet it. I saw well enough, schoolboy as I was, what the gaming-table and his numberless expenses would lead him to.

MRS. ARDEN.

And didst thou think of him thus?

YOUNG ARDEN.

Yes, I did, mother; but I loved him, nevertheless, and will love him still.—Be composed, then, I beseech you, and let me run to him immediately.

MRS. ARDEN (*holding him*).

Not now, not now! Stay with me, and tell me why thou hast come to us so unexpectedly.

YOUNG ARDEN.

That can soon be told.—But here is Madaline. Well, cousin; you are come to welcome me? (*Holding out his hand.*)

Enter MADALINE.

MADALINE.

I was told you were here.

YOUNG ARDEN.

And this is the rueful face you put on for my

welcome. Fie, Madaline! you should cheer my mother, and look pleasantly before her.

MRS. ARDEN.

Don't reproach her: she is very kind and very considerate. Without her, I should sink altogether.

YOUNG ARDEN.

Then, she is a good girl, and shall be chidden no more.

MADALINE.

We shall make up this difference in the next room, where I have ordered some refreshment for you; and you must eat something after your journey, and persuade my aunt to do so, too. You must both eat, if you would not sink under entirely.

YOUNG ARDEN.

I thank you, kind cousin, and so we will. Sink under, sayest thou? No, no! we shan't do that, God willing. There is more spirit in us than that comes to; — is there not, mother? (*Taking her arm under his as they go off.*)

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I. — BRUTON's *Lodgings.* ROBINAIR *and* BRUTON, *speaking as they enter.*

ROBINAIR.

And you are just come from hearing Arden's examination? How went it?

BRUTON.

It was scarcely closed when I came away, — as I thought you would be waiting for me; but I heard all the material part.

ROBINAIR.

And how did he behave himself?

BRUTON.

With greater caution and presence of mind than I should have supposed a character like his, depressed with a sense of disgrace, was capable of.

ROBINAIR.

Indeed! He kept possession of himself, then?

BRUTON.

Wonderfully: he has not betrayed himself in one of his answers, though he was questioned very shrewdly.

ROBINAIR.

Ha! where have those brains been stored up all this while, which he now brings into use for the first time? "Call no man happy till he be dead," says the old proverb. We must now add some words to it: Call no man a fool till the same seal has been set upon him.

BRUTON.

Ay; strong necessity will make a man wise as well as bold. But your dislike to Arden made you undervalue his abilities.

ROBINAIR.

Devil take him and them both!—Not once off his guard?

BRUTON.

Not once, as far as I could judge of the matter. It will be proved, indeed, that, a few days previous to the date of the forgery, he purchased at the stationer's with whom old Fenshaw deals, that peculiar kind of paper upon which the old gentleman always writes his money bills,—a kind which he had never purchased before: but this circumstance is not very conclusive, since Fenshaw acknowledges giving him a bill of the same date, though for a much smaller sum. Now the old gentleman's memory is impaired, and he may easily be supposed to have set down, in mistake, one sum for another. Your having seen the real bill is the only circumstance that

makes positively against him. His life, therefore, is in your hands.

ROBINAIR.

I know it is. Now is my time of revenge for all the scorn, for all the insults, I have endured from that proud woman.

BRUTON.

And is it generous to use it?

ROBINAIR.

Generous! and hast thou kept company with me all these years, Bruton, to talk so like a simpleton as thou dost? I have carried myself with a show of specious sentiments to the world; as every man must do who is not a fool, and intends to live with some credit in it. I have been the delicate, the liberal, the good, and, above all, the good-natured Mr. Robinair, to many; but when did I ever pretend to refinement or generosity before thee?

BRUTON.

I cannot, indeed, greatly accuse thee of it. But the present case is so very distressing.

ROBINAIR.

It is so; I apprehend as much, good Mr. Bruton.

BRUTON.

But you have lived upon poor Arden; you

have encouraged him in all kinds of extravagance.

ROBINAIR.

Well, Sir, this has not escaped my memory.

BRUTON.

You have enticed him to the gaming table, and ruined him.

ROBINAIR.

Well; of this, also, I have some recollection.

BRUTON.

And your lax doctrines respecting money transactions have, I doubt not, suggested to him, that robbing an old relation of what he could easily spare, and of what, in the course of a few years, would probably be his own by right, could scarcely be considered as a crime.

ROBINAIR.

Thou sayest truth: I have done all this. And wherefore have I done it, thinkest thou? For the paltry gains to be made from the ruin of a man of moderate fortune?—*I*, who had talents to have speculated on a much grander scale? Out upon thy little narrow conceptions!

BRUTON.

Nay, I knew that revenge for disappointed passion had a good share in all your manœuvres.

ROBINAIR.

Sharp-witted fellow! thou knowest that I loved his wife, and was rejected by her, who preferred this fool to me; that I went abroad in disgust, and, upon my return, insinuated myself into his confidence, with the hope of sowing discord between them, and, if possible, of undermining her fidelity. Thou knowest she has still treated me with disdain, so that nothing but his complete ruin can possibly detach her from him; — thou knowest all this, yet hast the folly to stand before me, with that piteous countenance of thine, desiring me seriously to undo all I have been labouring for so long. Will the wolf, with the prey in his fangs, forbear to devour it, because, forsooth, he will be called an unamiable wolf?

BRUTON.

I would have you at least to consider ——

ROBINAIR.

No! good, compassionate Mr. Bruton: I have considered, and I will not save him. On the scaffold let him die! and let those who have suffered within them the torments that I have endured condemn me, if they can. It is not by calm, even-tempered dozers through life, such as thou art, that I will submit to be judged.

BRUTON.

Then, by my faith, Robinair, thou art a fiend!

ROBINAIR.

Better be a fiend only, than fiend and fool both. I am a man of more simplicity than thou art; I do not try to have so many contrary qualities at once. Sound no more of that piteous nonsense in my ears!

BRUTON.

Pity, indeed, seems out of use at present. Who could have thought that old man would have prosecuted the life of one who, though distantly related to him, is still his nearest of kin! Some secret enemy has goaded him to it.

ROBINAIR.

And thou art at a loss, I doubt not, to guess who this wicked enemy may be; judging, as thou dost, in all the imbecility of innocence. (*Smiling on him with malignant contempt.*)

BRUTON (*shrinking from him in disgust*).

I understand that smile.

ROBINAIR.

Thou hast understanding enough for that, hast thou? — But do not imagine, however, that I am entirely destitute of every good disposition. I intend, when I am in possession of old Fenshaw's fortune, which he has promised to bequeath to me, to be liberal, and even generous, both to Mrs. Arden and her son. When she is

in my power I will treat her nobly; but she must be in my power.

BRUTON.

I have no more to say to you; my pleading is at an end.

ROBINAIR.

I am glad to hear it. And now, dropping this subject, which must never again be resumed, let me remind you of the business you are to transact for me at the other end of the town. I have ordered my carriage to meet me here, and it is just drawing up at the door. (*Hasting away, and returning.*) Half-past twelve, I think, is the time Mrs. Arden has appointed?

BRUTON.

Yes, it is the time she fixed.

ROBINAIR.

I must hurry home, then. [*Exit.*

BRUTON (*alone*).

And this is the man to whom my cursed extravagance has subjected me, while, having me in his power, he treats me like a menial—like a slave! Oh, thou vice of gaming! thou hast overthrown thy thousands and tens of thousands, never to rise again—never again to bear themselves with the erect dignity of an honest man!

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

An open Hall or Lobby in a Prison, from which a wide arched passage branches off. Over the arch is written, "The Felons' Side."

Enter YOUNG ARDEN, *meeting the Head* GAOLER.

GAOLER.

Did you look for any one, young gentleman?

YOUNG ARDEN.

I am wrong, I see. Can you show me the way to the debtors' side? There is a prisoner I would inquire after.

GAOLER (*pointing in another direction*).

That, Sir, will lead you to it: but you had better stop here a few minutes; for yonder are persons coming this way, conducting a prisoner from examination,—a poor unfortunate gentleman.

YOUNG ARDEN.

A gentleman! what is his name?

GAOLER.

His name is Arden.

YOUNG ARDEN (*aside*).

Examination! is it a meeting with creditors he means?

GAOLER.

Yonder he comes, poor man!

YOUNG ARDEN.

You seem to pity him very much.

GAOLER.

It always grieves me to see a gentleman in his situation.

YOUNG ARDEN.

You have a kind heart, Sir; but misfortunes will happen to persons in every rank of life?

GAOLER.

Here he is, and his friends and counsel with him.

YOUNG ARDEN (*aside, and shrinking back*).

I'll stand behind; I cannot go up to him before those people.

Enter ARDEN, *with his* Counsel, *&c., and walks slowly across the Stage, passing close by his Son, who keeps behind the* Gaoler, *casting a furtive look at his Father's face as he passes; then, seeing him about to enter the Felons' Passage, springs forward eagerly, as if to prevent him.*

GAOLER (*pulling him back*).

What would you?

YOUNG ARDEN.

He is going the wrong way!

GAOLER.

He is right enough.

YOUNG ARDEN.

That is the felons' side!

GAOLER.

And therefore it is his.

YOUNG ARDEN.

Thou liest!

GAOLER.

What say you?

YOUNG ARDEN.

He is no felon!

GAOLER.

That will be known when his trial is ended.

YOUNG ARDEN.

What trial?

GAOLER.

His trial, that comes on to-morrow, for a forgery. (YOUNG ARDEN *sinks to the ground;* Gaoler, *beckoning to the* Under-Gaoler *to assist him.*) Poor lad! this has struck through his heart like an arrow. He must be some near relation to the prisoner.

UNDER GAOLER.

His son; I 'll pawn my life on 't!

GAOLER.

Ah, poor boy! (*Chafes his hands and temples, and* YOUNG ARDEN *recovers.*) My good young Sir, go into my house for a while and recover yourself.

YOUNG ARDEN.

There was a wonderful buzzing of voices round me.

GAOLER.

There was nobody spoke to you but myself; and I spoke softly, too.

YOUNG ARDEN.

I must go to my father.

GAOLER.

Yes, presently; but not till you are better recovered. Beside, he is engaged at present with gentlemen, who are assisting him to prepare for his trial.

YOUNG ARDEN.

His trial! Oh, oh! — But he is innocent!

GAOLER.

Yes, my good boy; we hope so: and then there is no fear of him.

UNDER GAOLER.

The innocent are never condemned in this country.

YOUNG ARDEN.

Ah! were that but certain, he would be safe.

GAOLER.

Then he is safe: so, cheer up, my sweet young Sir; and come with me to my house, hard by, till his counsel have left him.—How came you here without a conductor?

YOUNG ARDEN.

My mother desired me not to go till she could be with me; but I was impatient, and stole out of the house as soon as she left it to execute some business elsewhere. Alas! I see now why she forbade me to go. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

ROBINAIR'*s House.*

Enter MRS. ARDEN, *and a* Servant *showing her in.*

SERVANT (*placing a chair*).

My master will attend you immediately, Madam. [*Exit.*

MRS. ARDEN (*alone*).

And here I am in the house of this man, a humble supplicant for his pity! Righteous

Heaven! sunk thus low in misery, give me strength to support it! If I have been haughty or elated in prosperity, teach me now resignation in adversity!—I hear him coming.—Ah! do I feel pride still? No, no, no! what have I to do with feelings like these, when I am pleading for the life of my husband?

Enter ROBINAIR.

ROBINAIR.

Madam, I have kept myself at home in obedience to your appointment.

MRS. ARDEN.

I thank you, Sir, for paying so much regard to one so very miserable. I come to you, Mr. Robinair, a depressed and wretched suitor.

ROBINAIR.

Is there any thing, in any situation, that Mrs. Arden will deign to desire of me?

MRS. ARDEN.

There is, there is! there is something I must desire—I must beg—I must beseech of you; and I will not do your friendship for Arden the injury to suppose it possible that you should refuse me.

ROBINAIR.

I am infinitely honoured by your good opinion, Madam. In what can I possibly serve you?

MRS. ARDEN.

O tell me first — tell me faithfully and truly, what is your opinion of my husband's situation. He has been very imprudent, but it cannot be that he is guilty.

ROBINAIR.

Imprudence leads men into great temptation. You know whether or not the character of your husband made him more likely than other men to resist it.

MRS. ARDEN.

Alas! I know well the weakness of his mind, and I know his necessities were great: but great as they might be, they could never move him to commit such a crime.

ROBINAIR.

So do all good wives conceive of their husbands' integrity; particularly those who have enjoyed the felicity of a romantic attachment. How happy should I be to feel equally confident on this point.

MRS. ARDEN.

Then you are not? O, no, no! you cannot believe him guilty, how strongly soever appearances may be against him.

ROBINAIR.

I wish it were possible for me to hold your faith upon this subject, Madam, or even to avoid

the necessity I may be under of appearing on his trial, as the principal witness against him.

MRS. ARDEN.

Merciful Heaven! and do you walk about at liberty, waiting here to give the death-blow to him whom you have called your friend? Fly, fly, I beseech you! On my knees I beseech you to have pity on us. Fly this country for a season, and conceal the place of your retreat.

ROBINAIR.

Pray, Madam, do not give me the pain of seeing you in that posture.

MRS. ARDEN.

No posture but this till you have granted my request! Have pity on us! Fly the country, or conceal yourself immediately, and we will bless you. (*Still kneeling, and catching hold of the skirts of his coat, as he retreats from her.*)

ROBINAIR.

I will not listen to another word while you remain thus. (*Placing a chair for her; they both sit down.*)

MRS. ARDEN.

Then you will listen to me now: you will consent to fly, or conceal yourself, till the trial is over.

ROBINAIR.

Are you aware, Madam, that you are desiring

me to become an exile, an outlaw? to destroy my own character and credit in the world? Your many kind instances of regard for my happiness may indeed merit a grateful return, but something short of this (*ironically*). Command my services in any other way. My fortune is at your disposal. I will be the protector of yourself and of your son.

MRS. ARDEN (*starting from her seat*).

Heaven forbid! thy protection were the venomous coilings—— (*checking herself, and covering her face with her hands*).

ROBINAIR.

Of a serpent, you would have said. But, pray, speak without reserve, that we may understand one another completely. My protection is not, perhaps, what you would voluntarily have chosen; but, when no better expedient presents itself, it may possibly be endured. Ay, Madam, and shall be endured, if you hope for any favour for your husband, whom it is in my power to save, without flying the country. Must I commit perjury to please you, whilst your marriage vow, the bane of all my happiness, remains unbroken? Must I be the sinner, and you still continue immaculate? (*After a pause, in which she seems strongly agitated.*) Take this into your consideration, Lady. I shall sleep to-night in

my house near Chelsea, where, if you will have the condescension to come yourself, and acquaint me with your determination, I shall think myself honoured. — Excuse me now; I am exceedingly hurried with business. Let me have the pleasure of attending you to your chair, Letitia; I once called you by that dear name (*taking her hand familiarly*).

MRS. ARDEN (*pulling away her hand indignantly*).

Insulting, detestable villain! let one general ruin overwhelm us all, before I owe any thing to thee. (*Hurrying from him.*) [*Exit.*

ROBINAIR (*looking after her significantly*).

Yes; pride must make some blustering, before he be entirely turned out of doors: this is but reasonable, and according to the working of nature. Yes, yes, yes! there will be time enough between this and midnight to smooth the haughty brow into submission. (*Walking hastily up and down, and stopping now and then as he speaks.*) Now will the days of thy scorn be remembered with bitterness, when, wife to a degraded husband, thou lookest timidly up to the eyes of a protector — even him whom thou hast rejected with disdain. — Let this once be, and I shall feel it worth all the —— No; I will not call it vil-

lany — my provocations would justify any thing — all the artful management it has cost me.

Re-enter MRS. ARDEN, *with mortified timidity.*

MRS. ARDEN.

You will be at Chelsea to-night?

ROBINAIR.

Yes, Lady, where I shall be delighted to see you, and to obey your commands.

[*Exit* MRS. ARDEN.

(*Holding up his hands exultingly.*) I knew it would be so! There was a rude burst of anger, to be sure; but the vision of a man's bare throat, with a noose about it, has crossed her in the hall, and checked her wayward steps. — Ho, there!

Enter a Servant.

Send notice to the housekeeper at Chelsea that —— No, I must write down her directions, else there will be some cursed mistake or other. (*Goes to a table, and sits down to write, while the* Servant *waits.*)

Enter BRUTON.

BRUTON.

You are engaged I see.

ROBINAIR.

No, no! I'll speak to you immediately.

BRUTON (*aside*).

What is he about now? No good, I'm sure, from the eagerness of his eye, and that ironical twisting of his mouth.

ROBINAIR (*after sealing the note, and giving it to the* Servant).

Bid Charles carry that to Mrs. Cookum without delay.

[*Exit* Servant, *and* ROBINAIR *comes forward to* BRUTON *with a gay, light step.*

BRUTON.

You are not surely going to Chelsea to-night.

ROBINAIR.

But I am; and I tell thee besides, as surely, that thou art going with me.

BRUTON.

Indeed! I am engaged elsewhere.

ROBINAIR.

Let the elsewhere forego thy gracious presence for this bout. Thou art engaged to me.

BRUTON.

Something too arbitrary, methinks.

ROBINAIR.

O! displeased, I see! Come, come; do not be a restive fool upon my hands, when I want thee confoundedly. For I must be in waiting there before the hour; and I hate to wait alone.

BRUTON.

For whom.

ROBINAIR.

She who has the prettiest hand and foot of any woman in England; she who has haunted, and scorned, and tormented me for almost the half of my life; for Arden's wife. I have an appointment with her at midnight.

BRUTON.

You do not say so, — you cannot say so. Has misery driven her to this?

ROBINAIR.

We shall see — you shall see.

BRUTON.

I cannot believe it.

ROBINAIR.

Be as sceptical and as cautious as you please; but go with me to Chelsea in the evening, and let seeing and believing be yoke-follows.

BRUTON.

I will not go. — Nay, I will go to see you disappointed. You deceive yourself: she cannot have fallen so low.

ROBINAIR.

Ay, she was lofty enough once. But the lark cannot be always in the clouds; the heavy rain beats upon her wings, and down she drops upon

the wet sod, where earth-grubs and snails are her neighbours. — Disappointed, ha! ha! ha! — But I have other things which thou must do for me in the mean time — nay, don't scowl so — things that must be done. — Ha! here comes Beacham's man with the money.

Enter a Person, with a small bag.

BRUTON (*aside, as he turns from* ROBINAIR).

Domineering insolence! it is insufferable.

ROBINAIR (*to the* Stranger).

Good morning, Mr. Martin; how is your master? You have brought, I see, the little sum that was left unsettled between us. He is an honourable fellow. But thou shakest thy head, man; thou lookest ruefully.

STRANGER.

Come honesty first, and honour will follow.

ROBINAIR.

Fogh! some old saw of your grandmother's; quite out of date now, my good friend. Look not so grum at me: there is something to make thee more cheerful. (*Offering him money with one hand, while he receives the bag with the other.*)

STRANGER.

I'll have nothing of yours, Sir.

ROBINAIR.

No! good gold pieces are not to be despised.

STRANGER.

Be they gold or copper it is the same to me.

[*Exit.*

ROBINAIR (*laughing*).

What think you of this angry fool, Bruton?

BRUTON.

He has cause to be angry. You have stripped the coat from the back of his poor silly master.

ROBINAIR.

Well; he will go to Paris in his waistcoat. He may find it the fashion there, perhaps, to go so clothed.

BRUTON.

And how long will he keep his waistcoat when he gets amongst the worthies of the Palais Royal?

ROBINAIR.

What does that signify? The thick waters of the Seine will make him coat, vest, and winding-sheet, all in one, with no more to do about the matter.

Enter a Man, with papers, &c.

Oh, ho! Mr. Skriever; you are come at last with the deeds.

SKRIEVER.

Yes, Sir, and you will find the security good, and the interest of your money regularly paid.

ROBINAIR.

I trust so; for otherwise I shall foreclose upon you without hesitation. Go into my library, and I'll sign it there.

[*Exit* SKRIEVER *by a side door.* (*To* BRUTON, *after going about the room fantastically, with a gay, skipping step.*) The breezes of fortune, you see, are in my sails.

BRUTON.

But you may be wrecked full soon, notwithstanding.

ROBINAIR.

Never fear: I am a skilful pilot as well as a bold sailor, and when I am —— O what may I not be! — I will make a man of thee, Bruton.

BRUTON.

Could you restore me to the man I was, when you first took me up, I should ask no better fortune, and take my leave of you for ever.

ROBINAIR.

What! leave me? No, no! I must not part with that sober face, and seeming sanctity of thine: they will be necessary to keep me in credit with the world. "Hold your tongue," will the faded maids and dowagers exclaim, as

they arrange their cards, "I will not hear one word against Sir John Robinair, as long as he is so intimate with good Mr. Bruton."

BRUTON.

Sir John Robinair!

ROBINAIR.

Yes; I shall be a baronet by and by, you know. There will be nothing very wonderful in that, surely. But I waste time here: I must go and sign those deeds.

[*Exit into the side door.*

BRUTON.

He is mad with prosperity. But pride comes before a fall; and may the proverb be verified here! [*Exit.*

ACT III.

The Prison; ARDEN *is discovered sitting in a disconsolate posture. After a pause, he rises, and walks once or twice across the front of the Stage.*

ARDEN.

And if it should come to this, in what is it really different from that which, many times, in the accumulation of my distresses, I have wished for — I have almost been upon the brink of perpetrating? How often, after returning in despair from the gaming-house, have I wistfully looked at the pistols that hung on the wall, or the razor that lay on my table! — Ah! but disgrace, disgrace! The murmurs of detestation and pity; the broad gaze of the innumerable multitude; the last horrible act imposed on a passive wretch; — this is what the human mind strongly recoils from! this is dreadful! (*Sinks down again upon his seat.*)

Enter UNDER GAOLER, *bearing a covered dish, &c.*

UNDER GAOLER.

I have brought you something to eat, Sir: you will be quite faint if you fast longer.

ARDEN.

Take it away, friend; I cannot eat yet.

UNDER GAOLER.

Pray, Sir, be advised. If it were but a single morsel, it would do you good.

ARDEN.

Take it away — take it away, I pray thee. Why art thou so importunate?

UNDER GAOLER.

There is a young gentleman below, who wishes to see you, and my master is anxious you should take some refreshment before he comes to you; just, as it were, to strengthen you first.

ARDEN (*starting up*).

A young gentleman, said ye? A boy, do you mean?

UNDER GAOLER.

Yes, Sir, one of your good, manly, gentleman-like school-boys; but wonderfully out of heart, poor fellow.

ARDEN.

Good God! Show him up immediately.

UNDER GAOLER.

Yes, Sir; but will you not take a little wine first, if you will eat nothing?

ARDEN.

No, no, kind fool! it would choke me. Show him up immediately.

[*Exit* GAOLER.

Now do I feel all my miseries! Now am I the selfish, the cruel, the disgraceful father. O God! O God! what is the gaze of a multitude to this boy's eye?

Enter YOUNG ARDEN, *who, running up to his father, falls upon his neck, and bursts into tears.*

ARDEN.

Boy, boy! why hast thou come to me?

YOUNG ARDEN.

To bless you, father.

ARDEN.

To bless me, boy?

YOUNG ARDEN.

Ay, and to cling to you, father: to be with you and serve you, father; who should do that, as you are now circumstanced, but me?

ARDEN.

Woe is me! that thou shouldst have such an office! It must not be.

YOUNG ARDEN.

Turn not away from me thus! I am now at your feet in a posture you have never seen me take before. (*Kneeling and catching his hand.*)

ARDEN.

I know thee well: thou art a generous boy; thou art a noble boy; but what a father am I? I have blasted thy fair promise, freshly springing plant! I have blighted thee with disgrace!

YOUNG ARDEN.

Say not so, my dear father! what ruin is there to him who has a sound mind and a sound body left, and is willing to be a poor man, since Heaven pleases not that he should be a rich one? And for disgrace, I shall think it no disgrace to be the son of an unfortunate father, knowing that he is only unfortunate. Look not on me then with such anguish! You will be able to vindicate your character to the world. (ARDEN *shakes his head.*) Nay, and if all the world regard you as guilty, I will believe you to be innocent.

ARDEN.

Oh, oh, oh! This is misery indeed.

YOUNG ARDEN.

Why that terrible groan, dear father?

ARDEN.

Thou wringest my heart, my son! — Little dost thou know —— but thou shalt know it. I have kept thy mother in ignorance, but I will

conceal nothing from thee. (*Going to the door to see if it be closely shut.*)

YOUNG ARDEN.

Good heaven! what is it you would tell me?

ARDEN.

The fatal progress of a ruined unfortunate man.

YOUNG ARDEN.

I know you are unfortunate.

ARDEN.

Hold thy peace, and hear me out.—Naturally thoughtless and profuse, and fond of the pitiful distinction that expense bestows, I dissipated an easy fortune which ought to have been thine, Edmond.

YOUNG ARDEN.

Nay, nay! take no thought of that: let it go. It is but a feather in the air; and may light where it lists.

ARDEN.

Having squandered it, as I said, that false friend Robinair ——

YOUNG ARDEN.

Is he false?

ARDEN.

False, base, and treacherous.

YOUNG ARDEN.

May he be sent to perdition then!

ARDEN.

Be quiet, be quiet, and hear me out. That false friend, who had insinuated himself into my confidence, by many flattering praises and professions of regard, and by sometimes accommodating me with small loans of money, which I still hoped to repay, introduced me to the gaming table. There I was at first allowed to be successful, and encouraged to risk still higher stakes: at last a tide of ill luck, as it was called, set strongly against me, and I was borne down to ruin and despair.

YOUNG ARDEN.

O what you must have suffered, father!

ARDEN.

I was not a very happy man, Edmond; and when I thought of your mother and you ——

YOUNG ARDEN.

Nay, nay! say nothing of this. We shall do very well: we are satisfied.

ARDEN.

I will go on with my story. Being thus desperate, I wrote to my old relation Fenshaw for the loan of a thousand pounds, which I sincerely meant to repay, whenever I should have it in my power.

YOUNG ARDEN.

I knew it, Sir: I knew you would willingly wrong no man.

ARDEN.

Nay, listen. Fenshaw, suspecting the state of my affairs, but pitying my distress, sent me, indeed, a bill on his banker, but it was only for a hundred pounds, which was nothing to my necessities. I had, formerly, to amuse myself, imitated different kinds of hand-writing, and once,—this is the circumstance that, if brought in evidence, along with another only known to Robinair, would have the strongest effect on the decision of a jury; namely, his having seen the bill which Fenshaw sent me. Nothing was concealed from him. Once, after copying a note of Fenshaw's so exactly that it could not be discovered from the original, I showed it to Robinair and said, "This may be a resource to me in time of need."

YOUNG ARDEN (*eagerly*).

But you said it only in jest?

ARDEN.

I did so then: but ruin overwhelmed me; I had no resource, and a strong temptation took hold of me. To convert this bill for a hundred into one for a thousand pounds, seemed so easily done; and still, like a madman, confident of re-

trieving all if I were but once more enabled to attempt fortune, I thought I should contrive to repay the sum, before the fraud could be discovered. This fatal idea came into my head in my despair, was rejected, yet still returned to me again, and, at last, an irresistible temptation fastened itself upon my miserable imbecility.

YOUNG ARDEN (*in a half-choked voice*).

But you resisted it?

ARDEN.

Alas! I did not. (YOUNG ARDEN *staggers back some paces, then sinks down upon a chair, and from that upon the ground, where he throws himself along, covering his face with his hands, while* ARDEN *strides to and fro on the front of the Stage, in violent agitation.*)

Enter MRS. ARDEN.

MRS. ARDEN (*to her husband, not perceiving her son, who is partly concealed by the chair from which he sank*).

Ha! how is it now? Thou art more overcome than I have ever seen thee before. Alas! if thy strength fail thee now, when thou hast such exertions to make, what will become of us?

ARDEN.

Let me alone — let me alone: thoughts of unutterable anguish are dealing with me.

MRS. ARDEN.

Alas! alas! I thought to have brought thee comfort.

ARDEN.

What comfort? Where is it?

MRS. ARDEN.

I went in quest of it, but I have returned empty. He is inexorable.

ARDEN.

O! I remember now. Thou hast been with Robinair then?

MRS. ARDEN.

Yes; I am come from his house, where I have knelt and wept at his feet.

ARDEN.

And he is inexorable?

MRS. ARDEN.

There is nothing to hope for from him. He has talked of befriending me and my son; but for thee he has no pity. He has talked, indeed, as if certain compliances on my part might have power to move him in your behalf, and desired me to acquaint him with my determination this night at his house near Chelsea; but there was a malignant mockery on his face, as he spoke, which made me regard what he said as an unworthy insult, that had no serious meaning.

ARDEN.

But it had a meaning,—a damned meaning. My life is in his power, and he had the audacity, even to me, to propose that which, were I but to utter it, would cover us both with shame.

MRS. ARDEN.

Let it not then be uttered! Thou hast rejected the detestable proposal with abhorrence: I know thou hast; and, for the rest, let Heaven in its mercy send us deliverance. (ARDEN *groans.*) O! how is this? Where is that vehemence of indignation? Surely thou hast rejected it with abhorrence!

ARDEN.

I did reject it with abhorrence, and I do so still. But, oh! Letitia! there are moments when the thoughts of public disgrace; of the last dreadful act of dying on a scaffold, a spectacle to the unfeeling multitude, does so terribly beset my imagination, that, were it possible to endure the idea of thy degradation, I could almost——

YOUNG ARDEN (*who has been eagerly listening, raising himself meantime from the ground by degrees, now springs upon his feet, and rushing between his father and mother, separates them vehemently with his thrown-out arms*).

But it is impossible.

MRS. ARDEN (*to her son*).

Ha! art thou here?

ARDEN (*to his son, who is looking fixedly upon him*).

Take off thine eyes from me, boy; they strike me to the earth. Look not so on one whom thou hast called thy father. I know the spirit that is in thee, and, alas! I know that it is none of mine. Thou hast clung round my knees, and the first word of thy lips has been my name; thou hast clung to my side, and appeared to belong to me, but the soul that is in thee claims a far higher descent; thou shouldst have been the son of a nobler father. Yet strike me not to the earth in my wretchedness: I can bear any degradation but this.

YOUNG ARDEN.

Father, father! speak not such words of humiliation: they are in my heart like daggers; they pierce it to the core. If I have looked at you as I ought not to have looked, punish me as you will, but, oh! not in this manner! Give me any other chastisement! You are the father that Heaven has given me, and I will be your son in riches and poverty; in honour and disgrace.

ARDEN.

My noble, my generous boy! Oh, the curse of my unutterable folly! What a proud father I might have been! But now —— No, no! change thy name, and let no creature know who it was that gave thee being. Let me die the

death of a malefactor: it will be horrible, but it will be short.

YOUNG ARDEN.

May you not yet be saved?

ARDEN.

I ask it not now: I am resigned, if thou canst save thyself from infamy, and wilt blot out from thy remembrance that a weak wish for life did once for a moment betray me into unworthy thoughts.

MRS. ARDEN.

O God! and is there no deliverance for thee? Can any thing be a crime that saves thy life?

ARDEN.

Speak not of this again. The degrading wish which I have torn from my breast, shall return to it no more. Be calm, be resigned, my dear Latitia: there is no deliverance.

YOUNG ARDEN (*after a thoughtful pause, springing up in the air*).

But there is — there is deliverance!

ARDEN.

What keen voice of exclamation is this? Art thou beside thyself?

YOUNG ARDEN.

No; but I am beyond myself. I am more than myself. The strength of a man thrills along

my new-strung limbs, and with it there is deliverance for thee. (*Running hastily to the door.*)

ARDEN.

What dost thou mean? Where art thou running to, Edmond?

MRS. ARDEN.

Come back, come back, child: thou shalt not leave us.

YOUNG ARDEN.

Oh, call me not back! Let me be for this one day unquestioned, and free from control, and all my life after I am subject to your will.

ARDEN.

Knowest thou of any interest to be moved? of any means that we are ignorant of?

YOUNG ARDEN.

Yes, father; and ignorant you must be. Let me go, I beseech you: I have a thing in my head, and with you I dare no longer remain.

ARDEN.

This is a strangely sudden thought.

MRS. ARDEN.

When shall I see thee again? I shall be at home in an hour or two.

YOUNG ARDEN.

But I sha'n't return to you then.

MRS. ARDEN.

Before dark, at least, I may expect you?

YOUNG ARDEN.

I sha'n't return so soon.

MRS. ARDEN.

Good Heavens! when shall I see thee?

YOUNG ARDEN.

Enquire not about me, I beseech you! After midnight, perhaps — but rise not when I knock at the door. In the morning — daylight will be dawning on the sky when I see you again. Farewell, farewell! and may heaven have pity upon us! [*Exit hastily.*

MRS. ARDEN (*running after him*).

I cannot let him go: there is something in his words that alarm me.

ARDEN (*pulling her back*).

Do not go after him, nor prevent him from following his own generous impulse, noble creature! There is some person whom he hopes to interest strongly in my favour; — some of his school-fellows, perhaps, connected with people in power. It is vain, indeed; yet let him follow his own ideas. He will have satisfaction afterwards in having made the attempt.

MRS. ARDEN.

Pray Heaven it be so! I have strange fear

upon me that I cannot account for. 'T is like a presentiment: I have become superstitious. — What if I should see him no more?

ARDEN.

Do not give way to it, my dear love! Misery makes us all superstitious.

Enter GAOLER.

Does any body wish to see me?

GAOLER.

Your Counsel, Sir, are returned; and as you are permitted to use the next apartment, where there is better accommodation than here, I have shown them into it, and they wait for you.

ARDEN.

I will come to them immediately.

[*Exit* GAOLER.)

Leave me then, my dear Letitia, and keep up your heart, if you can. I shall see you again in the evening.—God bless and support you, under the sad trials which my sins and follies have brought upon you!

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

A green Lawn, with Borders of Flowers, in front of ROBINAIR's *House, near Chelsea. Moonlight.*

Enter ROBINAIR *and* BRUTON *from the house.*

ROBINAIR.

The night air is cool and refreshing here: it is stifling to sit in that close library, which you are so fond of. (*Walking quickly up and down, and sometimes stopping to listen.*)

BRUTON.

Yet you give yourself no time to enjoy it. Is that hurried pace the motions of one who comes forth to breathe the still air of evening? There is a sky, too, over your head, with that peaceful, brilliant moon shining from it, to which the dullest eye might be turned with a species of devotion, yet you look not up once to behold it.

ROBINAIR.

This vile state of suspense! Who thinks of moon, clouds, or sky, when enduring it? (*Listening.*) I hear a footstep coming up the lane.

BRUTON.

My ears are less quick; I hear nothing: and if you are come out to listen for the arrival of her whom you expect, you will have the cool air about you long enough, I believe.

ROBINAIR.

What! think you she will not come?

BRUTON.

I am almost certain she will not.

ROBINAIR.

Thou little knowest how the proud may be subdued by distress.

BRUTON.

If I have any true knowledge of Arden, with all his weakness and folly, he will not submit to be saved by such base means as you propose.

ROBINAIR.

Pshaw, pshaw! thou art too simple; contemptibly simple. The love of life works powerfully in stronger minds than his. Besides, the lady may be willing to save him without his consent. She, depend upon it, will be here by and by.

BRUTON.

You are very sanguine.

ROBINAIR.

Not unreasonably so: she will be here ere

long. And then that eye of pride, those lips of scorn, that step of haughty defiance — ay, then shall I see them changed — changed into humble, abashed, submissive gentleness. This will be triumph! this will be happiness! yea, that very thing, happiness, which I have been pursuing all my life, and have never yet overtaken.

BRUTON.

And so you confess, after all your successes in life, the fools you have cajoled, the dangers you have escaped, the sums you have amassed, the passions you have gratified, that happiness is a thing which has still escaped you?

ROBINAIR.

Yes, Bruton, in some cursed way or other it still has escaped me.

BRUTON.

But you are resolved to make sure of it now, by becoming the object of concealed detestation to one whose open disdain has so long and so sorely galled you?

ROBINAIR.

Well, be it so! be it so! let her detest me as she will; but she shall, nevertheless, be the humbled mistress, and I the condescending protector.

BRUTON.

An enviable state, truly, you project for yourself!

ROBINAIR.

And Arden, too; he must in his turn give place, and bend his blushing brow to mortification and contempt.

BRUTON.

A blessed sight to behold!

ROBINAIR.

Ay, and that proud boy of his, who begins already, like his lofty mother, to bear himself with a spirit above his years, even he must crouch and hold his tongue in humbling consciousness.

BRUTON.

And thus circumstanced, you propose to be happy. Why, the fiends themselves enjoy as good happiness as this; and if such be your notion of enjoyment, Robinair, you need not be afraid of joining company with them hereafter, for you will certainly have served your time here as a noviciate of their order.

ROBINAIR.

Well, if I do take that road to preferment, I sha'n't have the regret of breaking up my intimacy with thee.

BRUTON.

Nay, I know not that. I am disgusted with this way of life, I assure you, and have very serious thoughts of reforming my bad habits.

ROBINAIR.

Reforming, ha! ha! ha! Why, what's the matter with thee? Hast thou got gout in thy head, or water in thy chest; or has thy good-natured physician threatened thee with apoplexy? Ha! ha! I am concerned to enquire into this matter, thou knowest, as thou intendest most certainly to make me thine executor.

BRUTON.

No, Robinair, I have none of the diseases you mention, nor any other, that I know of; but no one knows how long he may enjoy either health or life.

ROBINAIR (*with mock solemnity*).

To be sure, nobody knows how soon his glass may be run. Nobody knows when death may knock at his own door — we are all here to-day, but know not where we may be to-morrow. I have heard all this twenty years ago, from a much better preacher than thou art. — Come, come, let us go into the house again: our cool tankard is waiting for us.

BRUTON.

As you please: but here comes your man from town.

Enter MORGAN.

Returned from thy watching post, Morgan?

MORGAN.

Yes, Sir.

ROBINAIR.

And with any intelligence?

MORGAN.

I have kept my station there all the evening, on pretence of condoling with old Humphry, who is in grievous distress for his master; but I know not that I have picked up any thing particular.

BRUTON.

What has the lady been doing, Morgan?

ROBINAIR (*eagerly*).

Yes, what of her? Was she at home, or at the prison?

MORGAN.

She returned from the prison for an hour or two in the evening, and, after writing some letters, as they told me, or such-like business as that, returned to the prison again, where, she said to Humphry, she should stay till a late hour, desiring Robert to come with a chair for her.

ROBINAIR.

Not the chariot?—This really looks—— but

But art thou sure the chariot is not ordered afterwards?

BRUTON.

You would fain have the poor fellow to assist you in deceiving yourself. — Or did you not hear, Morgan, that it is suspected she will come round in her chair by Chelsea, on her way from the prison?

MORGAN.

No, Sir; I heard little of her intentions, they were all so taken up, before I came away, about young master.

ROBINAIR.

And what of him? What has he been doing?

MORGAN.

After spending a long time in the closet where Mr. Arden keeps his arms, he has left the house without speaking to any one, and unseen by any body; and all the servants, particularly Humphry, are in a terrible quandary about him; for he had not returned when I came away, and they fear some mischief has befallen him.

ROBINAIR.

Much disturbance about nothing, talking fools! They like to be frightened about something: it is an occupation for them, and does not hinder them from eating their supper.

MORGAN.

Nay, Sir; not a morsel has been eaten by them: for they all love the poor youth as if he were kith and kin to every one of them.

BRUTON.

He is, indeed, a fine-spirited creature. In his father's closet, said you?

ROBINAIR.

And are any of the arms missing?

MORGAN.

Humphry says a light fowling-piece is gone; but he is not sure that Mr. Arden himself did not take it some time ago to be cleaned.

ROBINAIR.

And the old fool is afraid the child will blow out his brains with it.—Well, since thou hast no other intelligence than this, Morgan, go thy ways to thy supper. [*Exit* MORGAN.] And let us move into the house also. See, the candles are lighted now in the parlour, and our cool tankard waits for us.

BRUTON.

With all my heart: we have been in this chill air long enough.

[*Exeunt into the house.*

Enter YOUNG ARDEN, *with a fowling-piece in his hand, stepping cautiously, and then looking round, as if disappointed.*

YOUNG ARDEN.

He has got into the house already. After watching here since twilight, I have suffered him to escape. Wretched timidity! though his friend stood so near him, I am marksman enough to have been in no danger of killing the wrong person. Foolish, cruel caution! must I return to my father again, and no deliverance gained? I will not return! Here will I watch till the morning, and shoot him in the light of day.—I will not return again to shame, and disgrace, and misery, and despair. (*Observing light from the window, and* ROBINAIR *and* BRUTON, *who make their appearance within, and sit down at a table, on which are some refreshments.*) Ha! yonder he is again! Now is my time. (*Raising his arm.*) Hand, hand, be thou strong and steady! heart, be thou firm! The life of my father is in the exertion of a moment. And Thou, great Father of all! wilt thou pardon this act? Wilt Thou pity me? Wilt Thou have mercy on me? O, have mercy! have mercy! though I dare not pray to thee! (*Goes nearer to the window, and points his gun, when* BRUTON *within changes his position, and comes upon a line with* ROBINAIR.)

Nay, this must not be: I must not take two lives at once,—the innocent with the guilty. (*After a pause.*) There is a window at the end of the room, looking to the beech walk; I'll fire in at that. [*Exit, making his way hastily through shrubs and bushes, which knock off his hat as he goes out. Presently the report of a gun is heard, and* ROBINAIR *within is seen to fall. Great commotion of* Servants *rushing into the room, and aiding* BRUTON *to give him assistance, &c. &c. Soon after* MORGAN *and others issue from the house to give the alarm.*

MORGAN.

Holla! holla! you who pass there! Murder! murder! There is murder committed here; and we demand of every body in the king's name to give us assistance.

Enter two Men *by a wicket gate.*

FIRST MAN.

Murder! where? who?

MORGAN.

In the house yonder! my master!

SECOND MAN.

We heard the report of fire-arms. Was it then?

MORGAN.

Yes, and the murderer can be but a little way off. Assist us in securing him.

SERVANT.

There is a breach in the hedge at the end of that walk: he will escape that way if we are not quick. Let somebody come with me, for I cannot grapple with a ruffian single-handed.

FIRST MAN (*looking in at the window*).

Ay, there lies the body within, as stark as any corse, upon a board.

MORGAN.

For God's sake, don't think of satisfying curiosity now! Try to secure the villain first, or he will escape. Come with me in this direction; and (*to* SECOND MAN) do you follow the footman yonder, since nobody will go alone.

FIRST MAN (*as they are about to disperse*).

Here is a hat on the grass.

OMNES (*gathering round him*).

A hat?

SECOND MAN.

Poh! it is but a boy's hat. Some varlet has come over the hedge to gather gooseberries.

MORGAN.

Is there a name in it?

FIRST MAN.

No, there is no name; so what does it signify? I'll e'en take it home with me. It will fit my Neddy to a marvel.

MORGAN.

Do what you will with it: but let us run. We lose time here.

[*Exeunt different ways.*

SCENE II.

The hall in ARDEN's *house.*

Enter MADALINE *and* ROBERT.

MADALINE.

It grows very late; did not the clock strike now?

ROBERT.

Yes, Madam; twelve and the quarter after.

MADALINE.

I know not what to do, Robert: your poor mistress is in a terrible state of anxiety.

ROBERT.

Yes, poor lady! I have listened for this half hour to her steps pacing backwards and forwards

in her own room, and it has gone to my heart to hear it. I'd give the best suit I ever had to my back, that my young master were returned.

MADALINE.

Humphry is a long time gone.

ROBERT.

An hour and twenty minutes.

MADALINE.

Only an hour and twenty minutes! But you have reckoned the time with a more composed mind than we have done: perhaps you may be right.

ROBERT.

My watch has reckoned it, Madam, which is more composed than any of us.

MADALINE.

Would he were returned!

ROBERT.

Shall I go after him?

MADALINE.

That would do no good. Open the street door, and listen if there be any footsteps coming. (ROBERT *opens the door and listens.*) Do you hear any thing?

ROBERT.

Yes, I do hear footsteps.

MADALINE.

Light steps like those of a boy?

ROBERT (*without side of the door*).

No, Ma'am; mighty heavy steps: but they are Humphry's, I believe.

MADALINE.

Ah! then he brings no good tidings. Do you hear no one coming after him? Is he alone?

ROBERT.

No one, Ma'am; he is alone.

MADALINE.

Then he has not found him; where can he possibly have gone to?—Humphry, I hope, has not told his mistress of his having been in his father's closet before he went out, and his suspicions about the fowling-piece.

ROBERT.

He has not; and, indeed, he thinks now that the fowling-piece was carried to the gunsmith's some little time ago.

MADALINE.

Humphry must be at hand now. Call to him.

ROBERT (*thrusting his head again out at the door*).

Holla! holla, there!—It is him, Madam; he answers me.

Enter MRS. ARDEN, *running eagerly.*

MRS. ARDEN.

What voices are those at the door? Is he returned?

MADALINE.

Humphry is returned.

MRS. ARDEN.

And alone?—O God! some mischief has befallen him. He would not have staid so late, to make me miserable. He never before,—even in his play, he was always considerate for me; and would he now, when all this misery is upon me —— O, no! some mischief has befallen him.

MADALINE.

Be more calm, my dear aunt, and hear what Humphry has to tell us. He is just at the door.

Enter HUMPHRY.

MRS. ARDEN (*running to meet him*).

Have you seen him?

HUMPHRY.

No, Madam.

MRS. ARDEN.

Have you heard of him?

HUMPHRY.

No, Madam.

MRS. ARDEN.

Nor seen any one who has seen him or heard of him?

HUMPHRY.

No, Madam. I have been everywhere in search of him, and have enquired of everybody I have met, but can learn nothing of him. There is scarcely a creature now upon the streets but the watchman, and you can hear his heavy steps dumping upon the pavement a quarter of a mile off.

MRS. ARDEN (*rushing towards the door*).

I'll go myself.

MADALINE (*holding her back*).

Alas! what can you do by going out? The night is dark, and you will meet with nothing but disappointment, perhaps insult.

MRS. ARDEN.

Let me meet with what I may, I will go; I will not be withheld. No night is dark to a mother who is in search of her son. What is insult to me? I shall be strong; I shall fear nothing.

HUMPHRY.

Indeed, indeed, my dear Madam, you will wander about to no purpose: and if my young master should return while you are gone, we shall have him running out again after you, like

a mad creature. Be persuaded to stay here: he will break his heart when he misses you, and finds only us to receive him.

MADALINE.

Yes, Humphry says right. Do return to your chamber. (*Leading her gently away.*) Humphry will be upon the watch, and give you notice when he comes.

MRS. ARDEN.

I cannot, I cannot! I'll walk up and down here. I shall go mad if I return to my chamber. (*Walks rapidly backwards and forwards; at last a knock is heard at the door, and she runs to it.*) It is he! it is he!

Enter YOUNG ARDEN.

My son! my son! thank God I have thee again! Long, long have I watched for thee: I have been distracted with fear. Has accident,—has illness detained thee?

YOUNG ARDEN.

No, mother; I am here now.

MRS. ARDEN.

Yes, thou art here now; and I would not have thee from me again for a world's wealth told ten times over. (*Looking earnestly at him.*) But where hast thou been? Thou art wonder-

fully pale and spent. Hast thou come along thus through the night? Where is thy hat?

YOUNG ARDEN.

Upon my head, is it not?

MRS. ARDEN.

No, my love: hast thou been wandering bare-headed in the night air?

YOUNG ARDEN (*putting his hand to his head*).

I knew not that I was so.

HUMPHRY.

My dear young Sir, what way came you? I have been in search of you everywhere.

YOUNG ARDEN.

I can't tell. I ran straight forward from it, through every open lane and passage that I saw; and here I am at last.

MRS. ARDEN.

Straight forward from what? Did any thing pursue thee?

YOUNG ARDEN (*in a quick altered voice*).

Yes, something did. — Have you any wine at hand, good Humphry? I am almost wild with faintness.

MRS. ARDEN.

Alas! I think thou art.

HUMPHRY.

Did you say wine, Sir, which you dislike so much?

YOUNG ARDEN.

Never mind, never mind; give me a good draught, though there were arsenic in it.

MRS. ARDEN.

Oh! thou art not well. Run, Madaline, and fetch him some cordial. [*Exeunt* MADALINE *and* HUMPHRY *different ways.*] O what is the matter with thee? Where hast thou been? Thou wentest out to seek deliverance for us, and the rebuff of some cruel-hearted man sends thee back broken-hearted and hopeless to me and to thy miserable father.

YOUNG ARDEN (*his eyes lighting up keenly*).

No, mother; I do not so return. I have kept my word with you: my father's deliverance is earned.

MRS. ARDEN.

And dost thou tell me so with a joy so wild and so terrible?

YOUNG ARDEN.

Hush, hush, hush! Speak not to me; look not at me; tell it to no one; be as if you knew it not. Say in your own heart, "He shall live but lock it up there unuttered.

MRS. ARDEN.

Dear child! thy words strangely perplex me. But here is the wine.

Re-enter HUMPHRY *with wine.*

Take a good draught of it, and then go to rest.—But will you not eat something? (*He shakes his head.*) Well, then, I will not urge thee.

HUMPHRY (*filling up a glass with wine*).

Here, my young Sir, and may it do you good; but I fear it will fly to your head, as you are not used to it.

YOUNG ARDEN (*having swallowed the wine hastily*).

No, it will not: I may take any thing now.

Re-enter MADALINE *with a phial.*

MRS. ARDEN.

We had better not give him too many things at once. Go to your chamber, Edmond, and sleep will restore you.

YOUNG ARDEN.

Sleep! Ay, if I could sleep.—Will you remove the light?

MRS. ARDEN.

Not if you desire to have it left.

HUMPHRY.

My dear boy! something has scared you.

I'll leave the light in your room; and shall I sit by you?

YOUNG ARDEN (*eagerly*).

Do so, good Humphry! that is very kind in thee.—And so, dearest mother, don't come with me, but let me pass to my chamber and lie down. (*Hurrying away.*)

MRS. ARDEN.

And wilt thou not let me bless thee ere thou goest?

YOUNG ARDEN (*returning to her*).

Thy blessing, my mother! (*After receiving her embrace, he kisses her hand fervently.*) If Heaven bless what thou blessest, I shall have nothing to fear.

MRS. ARDEN.

And dost thou fear any thing?

YOUNG ARDEN.

No; nothing, when I look upon you. Good night! good night!

[*Exit, hurrying from her, and followed by* HUMPHRY.

MADALINE (*observing* MRS. ARDEN, *who remains for some time lost in thought*).

My dear Mrs. Arden! what is your mind fixed upon so intently? Now that he is safely returned and gone to bed, take some care of yourself.

Let me entreat you to take some nourishment, and lie down for a few hours. Remember you must go in the morning to Mr. Arden, that you may see him before he goes to court; and the trial begins early.

MRS. ARDEN (*starting from her reverie*).

True; it is still night: it is not the hour yet.

MADALINE.

It is still night. I am begging of you to take some refreshment and go to bed, as you must be up early in the morning; and what you have to go through to-morrow, requires more strength than, I fear, you possess. Do you hear me?

MRS. ARDEN.

Yes, Madaline. I heard you speak; I knew you spoke kindly to me, but I knew not what you said.

MADALINE.

Let me go with you then to your room; and cheer up a little. All may yet go well.

MRS. ARDEN.

O, if that be! if all indeed go well, I shall soon cheer up.

[*Exeunt*, MADALINE *supporting her as they retire.*

ACT V.

SCENE I. — BRUTON's *Lodgings.* BRUTON *and his friend, a Justice of the Peace, are discovered in earnest conversation.*

JUSTICE.

And you decidedly say your suspicions rest not on Arden.

BRUTON.

Decidedly. There is not one trait in the character of the man that should raise in my mind the slightest suspicion; nor even any circumstance regarding him of any kind, his interest in the death of the deceased only excepted.

JUSTICE.

Did you not hint at another person whom you do suspect?

BRUTON.

I know a man whose fortune Robinair has ruined, whose sister he has seduced and abandoned, and whom I believe to be capable of executing the fellest revenge; yet, as I have no actual evidence to support my suspicions, you must not receive them from me as any kind of information to be acted upon. It were hard,

indeed, if the injuries he has received were alone made the cause of more injuries.

Enter a Servant.

BRUTON.

What do you want? I am at present engaged.

SERVANT.

One of Mr. Robinair's servants is below, Sir; and a poor labouring man is along with him, who found a hat last night on the grass-plat near the house, just after the murder was committed.

BRUTON.

Show them up immediately.

[*Exit* Servant.

JUSTICE.

This will probably lead to the discovery.

BRUTON.

Yes; murder, the proverb says, is always found out. And, in truth, it is often discovered by circumstances that appear at the first wonderfully trifling and minute.

JUSTICE.

When men commit such deeds, they do so in a state of mind which renders them incapable of perceiving what circumstances will excite or prevent suspicion; and they are as often detected from caution as from oversight.

BRUTON.

True: the mind in that state may be cunning; but it is a cunning which betrays oftener than conceals; like that of the poor cushat, which vainly tries to mislead a practised fowler by hovering over the bushes where her nest and her nestlings are not.

Enter MORGAN *and a* Labourer.

BRUTON.

Well, Morgan, what brings you and this good man here?

MORGAN.

This man, Sir, found a hat last night.

LABOURER.

Ay, please your honour, just as we were all setting off after the villain that killed that there gentleman.

JUSTICE.

Tell us, my good friend, in what manner you found it.

LABOURER.

In no manner at all, please your honour. I only sees it on the grass, and I picks it up.

JUSTICE.

Well, then, it was lying on the grass when you picked it up?

LABOURER.

Yes, your honour; and I'll tell you all how it was, without either meddling or making with it; though I did think there was no great harm in carrying it home to my poor boy, who has been going about bare-headed for this fortnight past, like an ouzle, with its feathers on end.

JUSTICE.

Well, well; where did you find it?

LABOURER.

Last night, your honour.

JUSTICE.

I should call that *when*.

BRUTON.

You puzzle him, my good Sir.

JUSTICE.

No matter.—(*To* Labourer.) When did you find it, then?

LABOURER.

Just there, too, please your honour.

BRUTON.

Don't question him so methodically; but let him tell his own story first.

LABOURER (*to* BRUTON).

Thank your honour, that is just what I means to do as soon as I can get the end of it. For

you see, Sirs, as soon as I heard the gun go off, and some one a-calling out "Murder!" I guessed as how some mischief was a-doing; so I runs into the garden in no time, and just before me, on the grass, near a thicket, on this hand of me ——No, no; on the other hand of me,—a yard off, belike, (for I'll tell your honours exact how it was,) I sees a black thing lying on the ground, at my feet.

JUSTICE.

And near the house? about a yard from it, you say?

LABOURER.

About a yard from the right or the left of me, I an't quite sure which; but, as I said, I took it for some black thing; but when I came close to it, I found it was a hat.

JUSTICE.

Well, well; give us no more of thy story at present, but let us look at the hat. Is there a name in it?

LABOURER.

No, your honour; and so I thought no harm to take it home to my poor boy. (*Shows the hat.*)

BRUTON (*starting as he looks on it*).

Good God!

JUSTICE.

What, Bruton, do you recognise it?

BRUTON.

I fear I do.

SERVANT (*to* BRUTON, *after examining it*).

It is the very same hat, Sir, that you gave in a present to young Mr. Arden, before he went last to school. I'll swear to it: I know it by the twisting of the band.

JUSTICE.

This is a strong fact. Come with me, my good friends: your several evidences must be taken in a more formal manner. You seem much hurt, Bruton.

BRUTON.

I am so. — (*Aside.*) Is it possible that the wretched boy has sacrificed himself for his father? (*To the* JUSTICE.) I'll follow you presently.

JUSTICE.

Nay, you must go with me now: I must not leave you behind. My duty requires me not to lose sight of you.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The Street before ARDEN's *House.*

Enter HUMPHRY, *meeting* ROBERT, *who comes out from the house.*

ROBERT.

Returned from the Court already? Is the trial over?

HUMPHRY.

Ay; thank God for it! and our master is a free man again.

ROBERT (*skipping about*).

O, rare news! rare news! Let us run and tell everybody. Acquitted,—acquitted; not guilty?

HUMPHRY.

To be sure he is. How can a man be condemned when there is no evidence against him?

ROBERT.

I knew it would be so; I knew he would be acquitted: I knew he had no more done it than I had done it. And yet, for all that, all last night, through my sleep, there was such a howl-

ing of a last speech in my ears I could get no rest for the sound of it.

HUMPHRY.

Hold thy tongue, fool! I hate to hear the very name of it. Have I not told thee already, I'll give thee a good sound beating if thou ever speak one word of such things again.—Run and take the key of the back gate and open it.

ROBERT.

Why so?

HUMPHRY.

Your master is coming home by a private way to avoid the crowd, and will enter by the back gate. In the mean time I'll go and inform my young master of the good news; for he must be quite overcome with despondency, poor boy, else he would never have rested quietly at home all this time. It is so unlike his usual stirring spirits.

ROBERT (*calling after* HUMPHRY *as he goes off*).

Humphry, hark ye, Humphry!

HUMPHRY (*turning back*).

What sayest thou?

ROBERT.

Did they raise a great huzza when he was acquitted; and did Master make them a low bow, and all that?

HUMPHRY (*pushing him off the Stage by the shoulders*).

Provoking fool! Run and open the back gate directly, or I'll make thee bow lower than thou hast a mind to. — He will be here in a few minutes.

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE III.

A small Court or Garden behind ARDEN's *House.*

Enter MADALINE *from the house.*

MADALINE (*looking about*).

I thought Edmond would have been here before me. What can make the child so still and inert at such a moment as this. My aunt need not have urged me to remain here to comfort him, I trow: he has kept himself out of the way of every body.

Enter HUMPHRY.

MADALINE.

Come near me, good Humphry; there is a thing I should have asked at thee sooner: did your Master know nothing of Robinair's death, till after he came into the Court?

HUMPHRY.

No, not a whisper of it, till the witnesses on the side of the prosecution were called for.

MADALINE.

And how did he look when he heard it?

HUMPHRY.

So astonished, at first, that his face became pale with astonishment; and one would have believed it was a witness on his own side that was lost. But soon after, I warrant ye, there was a wonderful change in his behaviour.

MADALINE.

How so?

HUMPHRY.

Why, now, to make it clear to you, Ma'am; seeing him before he heard it, and seeing him afterwards, was, according to my notion, like seeing a man crossing over a river lately frozen, with his half-bended body, picking a step here, and picking a step there, while the ice is bending and cracking round him on every side, and then seeing him when he gets fairly to the shore, lifting up his head, looking round him again, and standing upright and firmly on his legs, like a pillar.

MADALINE.

And Mrs. Arden — how did she receive the news of his acquittal? It grieved me not to be

with her; but she had beseeched me so earnestly to remain here with her son, that I was constrained to obey her.

HUMPHRY.

I thought so, Ma'am; for in truth she wanted a friend to be with her very much.

MADALINE.

Ah! I fear she did. How was it, Humphry?

HUMPHRY.

I carried her the news myself. Three steps brought me from the Court to the room where she waited; and had I been threescore and ten, I should not, I believe, have made more of them.

MADALINE.

And how did she receive it?

HUMPHRY.

O! fainted away like a corse.

MADALINE.

Indeed! O, that I had been with her! Did you tell her of Robinair's death, too?

HUMPHRY.

Yes, Ma'am, after she was somewhat recovered, I told her; but I had as lief have held my tongue.

MADALINE.

Why so, my good Humphry?

HUMPHRY.

Truly, I thought she would have been glad on't, knowing so well that she disliked the man for drawing in her poor husband into so many ruinous courses; but, contrarywise, she looked terrified when she heard it, and has worn a face of a marvellous thoughtful, gloomy cast ever since. — But here comes the coach up the lane. (*Listening.*) They will be here in a trice.

MADALINE.

And Edmond not yet come down to receive them: how strange! I thought an arrow from the bow would not have been swifter than he to meet his father. Indeed I wondered much that he did not rouse himself to attend his mother this morning; but his remissness now is astonishing. — The carriage comes no nearer.

HUMPHRY (*listening*).

No; it is not them. It has turned into another lane; and Mr. Edmond will be down stairs before they come.

MADALINE.

I hope so. Who would have thought such a brave, spirited boy would have been so deeply depressed with misfortune?

HUMPHRY.

I have my own notions about that.

MADALINE.

Your own notions?

HUMPHRY.

Don't look frightened, Madam. I watched by him last night, after his return, and from his tossings and restlessness, and some strange words which he uttered, as if in a kind of agony, once or twice, I shrewdly suspect the poor boy was at a fortune-teller's, to enquire about his father's doom, and that he was frightened with some horrid sight or other.

MADALINE.

Think you so?

HUMPHRY

I am almost sure of it. Those cursed hags make people run mad sometimes with the sights they raise up before them.

MADALINE.

I have heard of such things in the country, in days gone by, but now——

HUMPHRY.

But the days of London wickedness never go by; and if they have unsettled the brain of that noble boy, burning at the stake is too good for them.

MADALINE.

Nay, you are savage.

HUMPHRY.

Oh, Ma'am! had you heard what I heard! He gave one groan so deep and so terrible, that I started up and pulled the coverlet off him, to see whether there was not a man under it, so impossible it seemed that a boy should have strength to utter such a sound.

MADALINE.

And did you question him?

HUMPHRY.

I tried to do it, Ma'am; but whenever I began to speak, he looked so sternly at me that I dared not persist. — Blessed child! I never saw him look sternly on any one before.

MADALINE.

And had you no conversation with him at all the whole night?

HUMPHRY.

No, none. Whenever I said any thing, he covered up his face quickly with the bed-clothes, as if he were going to sleep; and so I could draw nothing from him, good or bad.

MADALINE.

There is something very strange in all this: I cannot understand it. — But, hark! there comes the carriage now.

HUMPHRY.

Ay, it is it; I know the sound of it well. It is at hand — it stops.

[*Runs and opens a small gate at the bottom of the Stage, and enter* ARDEN *and* MRS. ARDEN, *who both receive the embraces of* MADALINE.]

ARDEN (*looking about*).

So, Madaline, you are the first to meet us.— Ha! here he is.

Enter YOUNG ARDEN, *who runs to his father, and throwing himself upon his neck, bursts into tears.*

ARDEN.

My son!

YOUNG ARDEN.

My father!

ARDEN.

Yes, Edmond, I will now, indeed, be thy father; and to be worthy of thee and of thine excellent mother, will be the business of my future life. Thy noble nature shall not be put to pain for me any more. I shall see thee virtuous and happy: that will be my portion in this world, and worth all that my folly and extravagance have deprived me of.

YOUNG ARDEN.

See me happy, father! — Oh, oh! be happy yourself, and think not of that.

ARDEN.

How so, boy? Shalt thou not be happy?

MRS. ARDEN (*taking her son's hand tenderly*).

Shalt thou not be happy with us, my son? Shall thy father and I, united as we may now be in sober domestic peace, not have the blessedness of seeing thee happy?

YOUNG ARDEN (*with kindled animation*).

Yes, mother; you shall see it: you shall see me happy. I shall look upon my father and you in your domestic peace, and feel a kind of fearful happiness.

MRS. ARDEN.

O! what words are these?

ARDEN.

Let us go into the house. I must be alone with thee, Edmond: I must strain thee to my yearning heart in privacy.

(*As they are about to go into the house, a party of men burst in upon them from the small gate, which has been left unlocked, and lay hold of* YOUNG ARDEN.)

FIRST MAN.

Stop, Sir; you are our prisoner: we take you

into custody in the king's name. (MRS. ARDEN *shrieks, and is supported from falling by* MADALINE.)

ARDEN (*catching hold of his Son, to pull him from the men*).

You must be mistaken, friends; you can have no warrant against a boy like this!

FIRST MAN.

Read there: it is our warrant against Edmond Arden, junior.

ARDEN (*looking at the warrant*).

O God! (*Rushing upon the men.*) Ye shall take my life before ye seize him!

HUMPHRY.

And mine too, before you touch a hair of his head! (*Brandishing his stick, and rushing furiously upon the men, who keep hold of* YOUNG ARDEN.)

FIRST MAN.

Dare ye resist the king's officers? (*Drawing a hanger from his side.*)

HUMPHRY.

Ay, or the devil's either! What care I for the flashing of your steel?

[*A violent struggle ensues between* HUMPHRY *and* ARDEN *on one side, and the officers of justice on the other, in which* YOUNG ARDEN, *between the two parties, is wounded.*]

YOUNG ARDEN.

Oh! I am slain! Give over, dear father: fight no more for me, my brave Humphry.

[*A general outcry and panic; and they all close about him,* ARDEN *supporting him as he sinks to the ground, and* MRS. ARDEN *kneeling by him distractedly.*]

MRS. ARDEN.

Slain! O! no, no, no! Thou art wounded, love, but not slain: Heaven will not suffer such cruelty. — Run, O run for assistance immediately!

YOUNG ARDEN.

My dear, dear mother! nothing can save me.

MRS. ARDEN.

Say not so. No, no! thou wilt be saved.

YOUNG ARDEN.

There is sure and speedy death in this wound: I feel it, and I am glad of it. Move me not from this spot; torment me not with any vain assistance, but let me quietly go where I ought to go — where I wish to go; for it is not meet that I should live.

MRS. ARDEN.

No, no! thou shalt live! I will breathe my soul into thee; I will encircle thee, and grow into thee with the warm life of a mother. Death shall not tear thee from me!

YOUNG ARDEN.

Alas! my own dear mother! wring not your hands so wildly.

MRS. ARDEN.

Wo is me! In the very blossom of thy youth! thou pride— thou flower of my bosom!

YOUNG ARDEN.

How many mother's sons, not much older than me, die far distant on the ocean, on the field of battle, with many terrible wounds; and here I am beside you, mother, and shall look upon you, and keep hold of your hand till the last. — My father; where are you? Give me your hand. (*Taking* ARDEN's *hand, and joining it with his wife's.*) There, mother; I have earned him for you, and he will take care of you. — Will you not now be united in steady unbroken affection? This cheers me; this makes death almost pleasant to me.

ARDEN.

My boy! my noble sacrificed boy! this is agony.

YOUNG ARDEN.

Say not so, father! Mourn for me, but let it not be with this bitter grief. I am not sorry to die. I have, I fear, offended my great and awful Father; but I have prayed to Him to punish and forgive me. This is my punishment, and

I know by it that He has heard my prayer. O may He bless and pity you when I am gone! — But there is something I must say while I can speak.

ARDEN.

What is it, my love?

YOUNG ARDEN.

The men that arrested me — let them come near. (*To the men.*) Be ye witnesses that with my dying breath I confess myself guilty of Robinair's death, and solemnly declare no creature but myself had any knowledge of it. — My strength goes fast; but this hand and this hand (*pressing his father and mother's hands*) are still warm in my grasp. Who else stands near who has loved me? — You, cousin, you have been very good to me; and, if I had strength, I would thank you.

MADALINE.

My dear, dear Edmond! I love not my own brother better than thee: how shall I bear to think of thy sad end!

YOUNG ARDEN.

And Humphry too; where art thou? Give me thine honest hand.

HUMPHRY.

Oh, my dear young master! I would have laid down my life to save yours.

YOUNG ARDEN.

I know thou hast loved me well—better than I deserved. If I had lived to be a man, we should never have parted.—Wilt thou live with my father and mother when I am gone?—No, no! this is not right; I do not ask it. Thou wilt find some master who is able to reward thee as thou deservest.

HUMPHRY.

But I will live with them! ay, beg with them —starve with them. O, pardon me! it is not want of respect that makes me speak so.—Yes, I will serve them, for your sake, as I would serve no other master on earth, were he as rich as a prince.

YOUNG ARDEN.

This comes over my heart! My eyes are dark now; —lay me back a little. (*Groans.*) Be not unhappy if I groan somewhat. The pain ——

MRS. ARDEN.

Alas, my dear love! art thou in great pain?

YOUNG ARDEN.

No, mother; it is killing me now, but it is not very bad. Farewell, farewell! (*Dies.*)

[MRS. ARDEN *sinks down in a state of insensibility by the body, while* ARDEN *paces about in an agony of despair.*]

ARDEN.

Fool, fool, fool! vain, selfish, detestable fool! this is the end of thy vanity and extravagance; of thy contemptible ambition and thirst for distinction.—Thou art distinguished enough now,—the curse of Heaven is on this miserable head! (*Beating his forehead, and striding across the Stage; while the Curtain drops.*)

THE

PHANTOM:

A MUSICAL DRAMA.

IN TWO ACTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN.

DUNARDEN, *a Highland Chief.*
MALCOLM, *his Son.*
THE PROVOST OF GLASGOW.
CLAUDE, *his Son.*
CRAWFORD, *Friend of Claude.*
GRAHAM.
ALLEN, CULLOCH, *and other Highlanders.*
Sexton, Servants, *and other Inhabitants of Glasgow.*

WOMEN.

ALICE, *Daughter of the Provost of Glasgow.*
MARIAN, *Daughter of Dunarden.*
JESSIE, *attending on Marian.*
Bride, Bride's Maids, Housekeeper, *&c.*

Scene, in the Western Highlands of Scotland, and afterwards in the City of Glasgow.

THE PHANTOM.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — *A green Lawn, surrounded with Rocks, and Mountains seen in the distance. An assembly of* Highlanders *are discovered, holding bridal revelry; Bagpipes playing, and a noise of Voices heard, as the Curtain draws up.*

Enter ALLEN.

FIRST HIGHLANDER.

Welcome, brave Allen! we began to fear
The water-kelpy, with her swathing arms,
Had drowned thee at the ford.

SECOND HIGHLANDER.

Faith did we, man! thee and thy shelty too.

ALLEN.

Am I so late? There's time enough, I hope,
To foot a measure with the bonnie bride,

And maidens too.—'T is well I'm come at all:
I met the ill-eyed carlin on my way.

FIRST HIGHLANDER.

And suffered scathe by her?

ALLEN.

Ay, scathe enough:
My shelty, in the twinkling of an eye,
Became so restive, neither switch nor heel
Could move him one step further.

SECOND HIGHLANDER.

And so you were obliged to come on foot?

ALLEN.

What could I do? It was not with the beast
I held contention, but the evil spell
Of that untoward witch. — Ay, but for that,
I would defy the wildest four-legg'd thing
In all Lochaber so to master me!

FIRST HIGHLANDER.

Well, well; the pipes are playing merrily, —
Make up lost time as fleetly as thou canst.

ALLEN.

And so I will; for here are rosy partners,
Ribbon'd and cockernonied*, by my faith!

* Coil of hair on the top of the head.

Like very queens. They make, here as I stand,
Each garter'd leg to thrill, and toes to tickle.
(*Seizing one of a group of Girls, advancing from the Dancers on the bottom of the Stage.*)
Come, winsome Jean! I'll have a reel with thee.
Look not so coy: where did I meet thee last?
We have not had a merry-making here
Since Duncan Mory's latewake.*

JEAN.

Say nought of latewakes here, I warn ye well:
Wot ye who is the bridesmaid?

ALLEN.

Some gentle dame, belike.

JEAN.

Some gentle dame!
Dumbarton Mary, with her Lowland airs.

ALLEN.

Ay! she that look'd so stern, and said it was
A savage thing, or some such word as that,
To dance at old Glen Lyon's funeral. —
But, could the laird himself have raised his head,
He with his ivory stick had rapp'd her pate
For marring with her mincing gentleness

* The watching of a corpse.

The decent bravery of his last rouse. —
Come, let us have a merry reel together.

[*They mix with Dancers, who now advance to the front, where a bumpkin, or dance of many interwoven reels, is performed; after which the Bride is led to a seat, and some of her Maidens sit by her.*]

BRIDEGROOM.

Now, while the bride and bonnie maidens all
Take needful rest, we'll pass the cheering cup.
And, Rory of Glenoruch, clear thy throat,
And sing some merry song, meet for a wedding,
Where all are boon and gay.

BRIDE.

O, never mind for that! give us the song
Which thou wert wont on Clachen braes to sing,
And we to praise. Thou know'st the song I mean.

RORY.

On bridal day the bride must be obey'd:
But 't is a song devised for gentle folks,
Made by the youthful laird of Ballamorin,
And not for common clansfolk like ourselves.

BRIDE.

But let us have it, ne'ertheless, good Rory;
It shows how sweetly thwarted lovers meet
O' moonlight nights, and talk of happy times

Which fortune has in store for faithful hearts:
The silliest moorland herd can follow that.

RORY.

Then be it as you please; I'll do my best.

SONG.

I've seen the moon gleam through the cave,
And minute drops like diamonds glancing;
I've seen, upon a heaving wave,
The tressy-headed mermaid dancing:
But ne'er was seen, in summer night,
Beneath the moon, in brightness riding,
A moving thing, to charm the sight,
Like Flora to her Malcolm gliding.

I've heard a pibroch, through the wind,
As absent chief his home was nearing;
A half-stripp'd infant, sweetly kind,
With mimic words its mother cheering:
But ne'er were evening sounds so sweet,
As, near the spot of promise stealing,
The quick, soft tread of Flora's feet,
Then whisper'd words, herself revealing.

My boat I've fastened to the stake,
And on the shelly beach am pacing,
While she is passing moor and brake,
On heather braes her shadow tracing;
And here we'll pass a happy hour,
For hours and years of bliss preparing,
When we shall grace our girdled tower,
Lands, life, and love together sharing.

Enter CULLOCH.

ALLEN.

Ha! our young chief must be return'd, for here
Comes Culloch, with his staring freckled face.

OMNES (*gathering round* CULLOCH).

Well, man; what are thy news? where hast thou been?

CULLOCH.

We've been at Glasgow.

FIRST HIGHLANDER.

Glasgow! Save us all!

ALLEN (*half aside to* First Highlander).

I doubt it not: his master, I hear say,
Goes oftener there than his good father wots of;
Ay, or his sister either. I suspect
There is some dainty lady ——

FIRST HIGHLANDER.

Hush! say nothing.

ALLEN.

And so, brave Culloch, thou hast travell'd far:
And what is Glasgow like?

CULLOCH.

Like all Drumleary craigs set up in rows,
And chimneys smoking on the top of them.
It is an awful sight!

FIRST HIGHLANDER.

And what saw'st thou besides the craigs and chimneys?

CULLOCH.

There be six kirks, — I told them on my fingers;
And, rising from the slates of every kirk,
There is a tower, where great bells ring so loud,
That you might hear them, standing on this sward,
Were they on great Benlawers.

FIRST HIGHLANDER.

Tut! tut! thy ears are better than thy wits.

BRIDE.

And saw'st thou any silken ladies there,
With all their bravery on?

CULLOCH.

Ay, ladies, gentlemen, and red-coat soldiers,
And plaided drovers, standing at the cross,
As close as heather stalks on Hurroch moss.
Ah! well I trow it is an awful place!

ALLEN (*aside as before*).

And well I trow the chief has business there
He wishes no observer to discover,
When he, of all the idle household loons,
Took such an oaf as Culloch to attend him.
But I'll e'en go, before he join the dance,
And have a private word of him, to favour
My poor old mother in her ruin'd cot.

I know full well he will not say me nay,
Though the old laird himself be cold and close.

FIRST HIGHLANDER.

Go, then, and speed thee well!

[*Exit* ALLEN.

BRIDEGROOM.

Hear, bonnie lassies! the young laird himself
Will soon be here, and foot it with you featly.

OLD WOMAN.

O, bless his comely face! among ye all
There is not one that foots the floor like him,—
With such a merry glee and manly grace!

BRIDEGROOM.

We 'll have no further dancing till he come.
Meantime, good Rory, sing another song;
Both bride and maidens like thy chanting well:
And those who list may join the chorus rhyme.

SONG.

Upon her saddle's quilted seat,
High sat the bonnie Lowland bride;
Squires rode before, and maidens sweet
Were gently ambling by her side.
What makes her look so pale and wan? —
She 's parted from her Highlandman.
What makes her look, &c.

Where'er they pass'd, at every door
  Stood maids and wives the sight to see;
Curs bark'd, and bairnies by the score
  Ran bawling loud and merrily.
But still the bride looks dull and wan;
She 's thinking of her Highlandman.
    But still the bride, &c.

The Lowland laird, in bridegroom's gear,
  Prick'd forth to meet the fair array;
His eye was bright, his voice was clear,
  And every word was boon and gay.
Ah! little did he reckon then
Of bold and burly Highlandmen.
    Ah! little did he reckon, &c.

The bride she raised her drooping brow,
  And red as crimson turn'd her cheek.—
What sound is that? The war-pipe now
  Descending from yon broomy peak.
It sounds like marching of a clan;
O can it be her Highlandman!
    It sounds like, &c.

Their bonnets deck'd with heather green,
  Their shoulders broad with tartans bound,
Their checker'd hose were plainly seen
  Right fleetly moving to the sound.
Quick beat her heart, within a ken,
To see the valiant Highlandmen.
    Quick beat her heart, &c.

Now challenge-shout is heard, and soon
  The bare claymores are flashing bright;
And off scour'd many a Lowland loon,
  Who ill could brook the fearful sight.

"The fiend," quoth they, "from cave and glen
Has pour'd those stalwart Highlandmen.
"The fiend," quoth they, &c.

Then pistols from their holsters sprang,
Then wax'd the skirmish fierce and hot,
Blades clashing fell, and harness rang,
And loudly bluster'd fire and shot;
For, sooth to say, the bridegroom then
Full bravely meet the Highlandmen.
For, sooth to say, &c.

And so did all his near o' kin,
As Lowland race such stour may bide:
But sank, at last, the mingled din,
And where was then the bonnie bride?
Ay, ask at those who answer can;
Ask at the cunning Highlandman.
Ay, ask at those, &c.

The bridegroom, in a woeful plight,
Back to his furnish'd hall has gone,
Where, spread on boards so gaily dight,
Cold has the wedding banquet grown.
How changed since break of morning, when
He thought not of the Highlandmen!
How changed since, &c.

And who, upon Benledi's side,
Beneath his shieling blest and gay,
Is sitting by that bonnie bride,
While round them moves the light strathspey?
It is the flower of all his clan,—
It is her gallant Highlandman.
It is the flower, &c.

Re-enter ALLEN, *snapping his fingers, and footing the ground, as he speaks.*

ALLEN.

I've seen him, Sirs; I have had words of him.

FIRST HIGHLANDER.

Had words of whom?

ALLEN.

Of the young laird himself.

OMNES.

Hast thou? and is he coming to the green?

ALLEN.

He bade me say he'll join you in the evening.

OMNES.

And not till then?

ALLEN.

Some strangers have arrived.
And I have seen them too: the lady's mounted
Upon a milk-white nag; and o'er her saddle
A scarlet cloth is spread, both deep and wide,
With bobs and fringes deck'd right gallantly;
And in her riding gear she sits with grace
That might become the daughter of a chief,
Ay, or the king himself.

FIRST HIGHLANDER.

Perhaps it is the Glasgow provost's daughter,

Who is, as they have said, the very match
Which our old laird is planning for his son.

ALLEN.

Ay, he may plan, but love will have its way, —
Free, fitful love thinks scorn of prudent planning.
No, young Dunarden went not to the town,
With simple Culloch for his sole attendant,
To see the provost's daughter.

BRIDE (*to* ALLEN).

And so he will not join us till the evening?

ALLEN.

No, damsels; but here's ribands for the bride,
And for ye all, which he has sent by me.
Now they who have the nimblest hands amongst ye,
Will catch their favourite colours as they fly.
(*Pulls out ribands from his pouch, and dances about in a whirling figure to the bottom of the Stage, strewing about pieces of ribands, while the Girls follow, to catch them as they fall.*)

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The Hall in the Tower of DUNARDEN.

Enter DUNARDEN *and* MARIAN.

DUNARDEN *(speaking as they enter)*.

In sooth, she well may grace a noble mansion,
Or chieftain's hall, or palace of a prince,
Albeit her veins swell not with ancient blood.
If so much grace and sweetness cannot please him,
He must be ill to win. And by my faith!
Perhaps she is this same mysterious lady,
To whom, as thou suspectest, his late visits,
So frequent and so long, have been devoted.

MARIAN.

Ah, no! I fear another has his heart, —
His constant heart, whom *he*, at least, will think
Fairer than this sweet maid, or all besides.

DUNARDEN.

And if it should be so, will nothing please him
But the top-flower of beauty and perfection?
The second best, methinks, ay, or the third,

Where fortune gilds the prize, might suit him well.
Why dost thou shake thy head?

MARIAN.

What might be, and what is, stand far apart,
When age and youth on the same objects look.

DUNARDEN.

Was I not young, when, of thy grandsire's daughters,
I chose the fairest, and was plainly told
Her heart and hand were promised to another?
But did I then perversely mope and pine?
No, I trow not: I cleared my cloudy brow,
And wooed the second fairest, thy poor mother.

MARIAN.

So will not he.

DUNARDEN.

Why so: belike he will not,
If thou abet his folly, as, methinks,
Thou art inclined to do.

MARIAN.

No, father; not inclined: I shall regret
As much as you, if any prepossession
Prevent him from approving this fair maid,
Who is, indeed, most gentle and engaging.

DUNARDEN.

Out on thy prepossessions! Younger sons,

Who may be soldiers, sailors, drovers, ay,
Or tinkers if they will, may choose a mate
With whom, o'er sea or land, through burgh or city,
To scour the world. But for the elder born,
Who must uphold the honours of the race,—
His ancient race,—he is not thus at liberty
To please a youthful fancy.

MARIAN.

But yet, dear Sir, you may be ignorant ——

DUNARDEN.

What! am I ignorant? Do I not know
The world sufficiently to guide and counsel
Those through whose body my own blood is flowing?
Not many men have had more opportunity
To know men and their ways, and I have turn'd it
To some account; at least I fain would think so.
I have been thrice in Edinburgh, as thou knowest,
In Glasgow many times, in London once;
And I, forsooth, am ignorant!

MARIAN.

Dear father!
You would not hear me out: I did not mean
That you were ignorant of aught belonging
To worldly wisdom; but his secret heart,
As I have said before, his prepossessions ——

DUNARDEN.

And what has he to do with prepossessions?
He is, of all men, bound to wed for wealth,
Since he, with his unceasing liberalities,
Would bare me to the quick. No tacksman dies,
But he must have appointed for his widow
A house, with right of browsing for her goats,
And pasture for a cow, all free of charge.
The bedrid carlins, too, and orphan brats,
Come all on me, through his petitioning;
And I, God help me! have been weak enough
To grant such suits too often.

MARIAN.

You will not say so on your dying day.

DUNARDEN.

For that, indeed, it may be well enough;
But for our living days, I needs must say,
It doth not suit at all.— If he were frugal,
And would with care lay up what is our own;
Having some hoarded store, he might more reasonably
Indulge his *prepossessions*, as you phrase it.

MARIAN.

Nay, be not angry with him.

DUNARDEN.

Angry with him!
Such want of reason would provoke a saint!
Is he to spend the rents with open hand,

Stretch'd out to all who need, or all who ask;
And please himself besides, by an alliance
With some slight May, who brings but smiles and bloom
To pay the yearly charges of her state?

MARIAN.

We do not know her yet, and cannot say
That she is poor.

DUNARDEN.

But we may shrewdly guess.
Else why those stealthy visits,—this concealment?
Oh, 't is provoking! This, our Provost's daughter
Is just the match that would have suited us,—
That would support our house, and clear our lands,
And he, forsooth!——I'll cast him from my favour!

MARIAN.

I know you will not.

DUNARDEN.

Lady Achinmore,
If he persist I'll say and do it too.
His prepossessions truly! mighty plea!
Supported, too, by Lady Achinmore. (*Walking in wrath to the other end of the hall.*)

MARIAN (*aside*).

I'll hold my tongue, and let the storm subside;
For when he calls me Lady Achinmore,
Reply is worse than useless.

DUNARDEN (*returning*).

Methinks the lady tarries in her chamber.

MARIAN.

To lay aside her travelling attire,
And put her robe or fashion'd mantua on,
Requires some time.

DUNARDEN.

And where is Malcolm? Surely he should be
In readiness, for very decency,
To bid a stranger lady welcome here.

MARIAN.

He will appear ere long, and is, perhaps,
Attending on her brother.

DUNARDEN.

No, he is not.
I saw young Denison walk forth alone,
As if to look for him.

MARIAN.

Here comes the lady.

Enter ALICE.

DUNARDEN.

Ah, gentle lady! were I half the man

That once I was, (how many years gone by
We shall not say,) you should to this poor hold,—
To these old walls which your fair presence brightens,
A rousing welcome have. But times are changed,
And fashion now makes all things dull and spiritless.

ALICE.

My welcome, as it is, gives me such pleasure,
I will not think of what it might have been.
Your daughter has received me with a kindness
Which has already freed me from restraint,
And given me courage to express my pleasure.

MARIAN (*to her*).

Thanks to thee, gentle friend! so may I call thee,
Knowing so well thy worth. Might we retain thee
Some weeks beneath our roof, then we might boast
That our poor welcome had not miss'd its aim.

DUNARDEN.

Some weeks! We 'll try to turn those weeks to months,
And then, who knows but that our mountain soil

May ev'n prove warm enough for Lowland flower
Therein to flourish sweetly.

ALICE.

Thanks, noble Sir; but we must go to-morrow.

DUNARDEN.

So soon! the daughter of my early friend
Beneath my roof, seen like a Will o' th' wisp,
Glancing and vanishing! It must not be.
Were I but half the man that once I was,
I'd fight thy stubborn brother hand to hand,
And glaive to glaive, but he should tarry longer,
Or leave his charge behind him.

ALICE.

Nay, blame him not: it was his own good will
Which made him from our nearest homeward route,
Though press'd for time, start these long miles aside,
To pay his father's friend a passing visit;
For Malcolm, he believed, was still in Glasgow,
So rumour said.

DUNARDEN.

I thank his courtesy;
But, if my name be Fergus of Dunarden,
Neither the morrow, nor next morrow's morrow
Shall see thee quit my tower. I'll go and find him,

And tell him thou thyself art captive here,
Though others be in thraldom of thy beauty,
And shalt not be released. [*Exit.*

MARIAN.

Thou seest how gallantly old hearts will warm
At sight of winning youth. He almost woos
thee:
And yet I would not pay a stepdame's duty,
Where I would rather yield a sister's love.

ALICE.

These words of kindness! Oh, you will undo
me
With so much kindness! (*Bursts into tears.*)

MARIAN.

Dear, gentle creature! Have I given thee pain?
I have unwittingly ——

ALICE.

—— Done nought amiss.
I have a silly weakness in my nature:
I can bear frowning coldness or neglect,
But kindness makes me weep.

MARIAN.

And can it be that coldness or neglect
Should e'er be thine to bear?

ALICE.

Better than me have borne it.

MARIAN.

Better than thou! In all your stately city,
Is there a lady fairer than thyself?

ALICE.

Yes, Lady Achinmore, there is a creature,
Whose beauty changes every other face
To an unnoticed blank ; whose native grace
Turns dames of courtly guise to household damsels ;
Whose voice of winning sweetness makes the tones
Of every other voice intruding harshness.

MARIAN.

And if there be, conceit will mar it all:
For too much homage, like the mid-day sun,
Withers the flower it brightens.

ALICE.

It may be so with others, not with her.

MARIAN.

Thou lovest her then?

ALICE.

O, yes! I love her dearly;
And if I did not, I should hate myself.
Heed not these tears, nor think, because I weep,
In saying that I love her, aught lurks here,
Begrudging her felicity. O, no!

MARIAN (*taking her hands affectionately*).

Sweet Alice! why so moved?

ALICE.

'T is my infirmity: I am a fool,
And should not go from home, so to expose
A mind bereft of all becoming firmness.

MARIAN (*embracing her*).

Come to my bosom; thou hast but exposed
That which the more endears thee to my heart;
And, wert thou firmer, I should love thee less.
But, hush! let me kiss off those falling tears
From thy soft cheek. I hear thy brother coming.

ALICE.

Thy brother?

MARIAN.

No; thine own,—thy brother Claude.
Ha! Malcolm, too, is with him! this is well.

Enter MALCOLM *and* CLAUDE, *whilst* ALICE *composes herself, and endeavours to look cheerful.*

MALCOLM.

Fair Alice, welcome to our Highland mountains!
Which, as your brother tells me, you admire,
In spite of all their lone and silent barrenness.

ALICE.

He tells you true: our fertile Lowland dales,

With all their crofts and woodlands richly
chequer'd,
Have less variety than their bare sides.

MALCOLM.

Yes, when fleet shadows of the summer clouds,
Like staghounds on the chase, each other follow
Along their purple slopes; or when soft haze
Spreads o'er them its light veil of pearly grey,
Through the slight rents of which the sunshine
steals,
Showing bright colour'd moss and mottled
stones,
Like spots of polish'd beauty, — they appear
Objects of varied vision most attractive.

ALICE.

Then, to behold them in their winter guise,
As I have never done!

MALCOLM.

You might then see their forms enlarged and
dark,
Through the dim drapery of drifted rain,
Like grim gigantic chieftains in array,
Bidding defiance to approaching host;
Or lifting their black shoulders o'er the mass
Of volumed vapour gather'd round their base,
Which seem like islands raised above the earth
In purer regions of the firmament.

ALICE.

And then how sweet the bushy glens between them,
Where waterfalls shoot from the rocks and streams,
Course on their wimpled way with brawling din!

MALCOLM.

Where low-roof'd cots, with curling smoke are seen,
Each with its little stack of winter fuel,
And scanty lot of furrow'd corn-land near;
And groups of hardy imps, who range at will,
Or paddle in the brook, while bearded goats
Browse on the rocky knolls, and kids are sporting
Amongst the yellow broom.

CLAUDE.

Pray thee have done, good Malcolm; thou wilt fill
This girl's fancy with romantic visions,
Which may, perhaps, make the rich, fertile fields
Of her own country seem insipid things.

MARIAN (*to* CLAUDE).

One thing, you would observe, he has omitted
In the description of his bonnie glen,—
The cottage matron, with her cumb'rous spade,
Digging the stubborn soil; and lazy husband
Stretch'd on the ground, or seated by the door,
Or on his bagpipe droning some dull dirge.

MALCOLM.

Well, freely I confess our mountain matrons
In useful virtues do excel their mates;
And in what earthly region is it otherwise?

CLAUDE.

I dare not contradict thee, and be deemed
Ungallant for my pains.

Enters a Servant, *and delivers a packet to* CLAUDE.

ALICE.

Is it from Glasgow?
Is there within the cover aught for me?

CLAUDE.

There is a letter with thy name upon it.
(MALCOLM *withdraws some paces from her.*)

ALICE.

Which, ne'ertheless, thou keepest to thyself,
With eyes intently fix'd upon the writing.
Is it a stranger's hand to thee unknown?

CLAUDE (*giving the letter*).

No, not unknown.

ALICE.

It is from Emma Graham (*to* MARIAN), and with your leave,
I'll read it by this window. (*Turns round, and starts upon finding* MALCOLM *close to her.*)

MARIAN.

Why do you start?

ALICE.

I knew not he was near me.

MALCOLM (*in confusion*).

I crave your pardon: 't was unwittingly;
I scarcely know myself why I returned.

[ALICE *opens the letter, whilst* CLAUDE *and* MALCOLM *stand gazing anxiously on her as she reads it to herself.*]

MALCOLM (*to* ALICE, *who seems to have come to the conclusion*).

Your friends are well, I hope; all's well in Glasgow?

ALICE.

She says a deadly fever rages there,
And nought is seen along their dismal streets
But funeral processions; nothing heard
But death-bells tolling, and the hammer's sound
Nailing in haste the corse's narrow house.

MALCOLM (*agitated*).

And she herself amidst this wreck of life!

ALICE.

She is, ere this, removed from the contagion;
For these concluding lines inform me plainly,
That she and all her family were prepared

To leave the town upon the following day
To that on which her letter has its date.

MALCOLM (*eagerly*).

I thank thee, Alice.

CLAUDE (*peevishly*).

Wherefore dost thou thank her?

MALCOLM (*haughtily*).

Whate'er thou hast a right to ask of me
Shall have its answer.

MARIAN (*to* CLAUDE).

When Highland pride is touch'd, some lack of courtesy
Must be excused. You have not from this window
Admired the falling of our mountain stream.
(*Leads him to the bottom of the hall, and detains him there in apparent conversation.*)

MALCOLM (*in a softened voice*).

So, gentle Alice, thou'rt in friendship knit
With Emma Graham! and meet companions are ye! (*Looking closer to the letter, which she still holds open in her hand.*)
Forgive me; Lowland ladies far surpass,
As fair and ready scribes, our mountain maids:
I ne'er before saw lines by her indited.

ALICE (*putting it up hastily; then hesitating, then recovering herself*).

No; why should I withhold it from thine eye;
For still the sweet expressions from her pen
Excel the beauty of its characters.
(*Gives it to him.*)
Peruse it then, (*aside, as she turns from him*)
while I peruse myself.

MALCOLM (*returning the letter, after having read it*).

Thou art in tears, sweet Alice; has thy mind
Some boding apprehensions for her safety?

ALICE.

No, God forbid! I have a feeble body,
The worn-out case of a more feeble mind,
And oft will weep for nothing. Heed me not.

MALCOLM.

No, say not so: thy mind and body both
Are lovely yoke-fellows, and will together—
God grant it be so! hold their prosp'rous course
For many years. (*Seeing her endeavours to speak.*)
Strive not to answer me;
This wish, though most sincere, deserves no thanks.

Enter DUNARDEN, *followed by* Servants, *carrying dishes of meat, &c.*

DUNARDEN.

Come, honour'd guests, the first dish of our meal,

Poor though it be, is passing to the board;
Shall we not follow it? Although, in verity,
I am ashamed that such a poor reception
Is offered to such friends.

MARIAN.

Dear Sir, they will forgive what things are lacking,
The heart's kind cheer not being of the number.

DUNARDEN (*to* ALICE).

Had I had timely notice of your coming,
I had sent messengers for thirty miles,
Cross moor and mountain, to invite our neighbours;
And tables had been cover'd in this hall,
Round which we should have held a merry feast.
And this same wedding, too, detains the clan:
So that our wings are clipt on every side.

ALICE.

Your courtesy is great: but surely, Sir,
A merry wedding well may make amends
For a lost feast, ev'n in Dunarden hall.

DUNARDEN.

And so it shall, fair Alice. — Pardon me
That I should be so bold to name you thus!
At fall of eve we'll join their merriment;
And thou shalt be my partner in the dance.
(*Taking her hand gallantly.*)
I'll have thee all and solely to myself;

Unless, perhaps, if these old legs should fail,
Thou wilt accept of this young Highlander
(*Pointing to* MALCOLM)
To be my substitute.—Come, gentles all!
By this soft lily hand let me conduct
The daughter of my old and honour'd friend;
My trysted partner too. Aha! aha!
(*Leading off* ALICE *gaily with a strathspey step.*) [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A Lobby or Entrance-room, with fire-arms, swords, and fishing tackle hung on the walls. Servants *are seen passing to and fro with plaids and bundles of heath in their hands.*

Enter HOUSEKEEPER.

HOUSEKEEPER.

Make all the speed ye may: in the long chamber
There must be twenty bed-frames quickly set,
And stuff'd with heather for the tacksmen; ay,
And for their women, in the further room,
Fourteen besides, with plaidings for them all.
The wedding folks have broken up their sport,
And will be here before we are prepared.

Enter the BUTLER.

BUTLER.

And what are twenty beds, when all the drovers,

And all the shieling herdsmen from Bengorach,
Must have a lair provided for the night.

HOUSEKEEPER.

And who says so?

BUTLER.

E'en the young Laird himself.

HOUSEKEEPER.

'T is always so; Dunarden's courtesy,
With all his honied words, cost far less trouble
Than young Dunarden's thoughtless kindness doth.
The foul fiend take them all! Have we got plaids
For loons like them!

BUTLER.

Faith, we at least must try to find them bedding.

HOUSEKEEPER.

Let each of them find on the green hill sward
The breadth of his own back, and that, I trow,
Is bed enough for them. Herdsmen, indeed!
(*Several* Servants *coming all about together.*)
More plaids! more plaids! we have not yet enow.

Another Servant.

And Elspy says the gentle folks must have
Pillows and other gear.

HOUSEKEEPER.

Out on ye! clamouring round me with your
wants,
Like daws about the ruined turret! think ye
That I —— I am distracted with you all!

BUTLER (*aside*).

And with some cups of good Ferntosh besides.

HOUSEKEEPER.

Howe'er the shieling herdsmen may be lodged,
I have provided for the Lowland strangers
Right handsomely.

BUTLER.

The bed of state, no doubt, is for the lady,
And for the gentleman the arras chamber.

HOUSEKEEPER.

Thou art all wrong: the arras is so ragged,
And bat holes in the cornice are so rife,
That Lady Achinmore bade me prepare
His lodging in the north side of the tower,
Beside Dunarden's chamber.

BUTLER.

They leave the house to-morrow, waiting only
To take a social breakfast. My best wine
And good Ferntosh must be upon the table,
To which the beef, and fish, and old ewe cheese
Will give a relish. And your pretty playthings
Of china saucers, with their fairy cups,

In which a wren could scarcely lay her egg,—
Your tea-pot, pouring from its slender beak
Hot water, as it were some precious drug,
Must be, for fashion's sake, set in array
To please the Lowland lady.

HOUSEKEEPER.

Mind thy concerns, and I will look to mine.
My pretty playthings are in daily use,
As I hear say, in the great town of Edinburgh;
And 't is a delicate and wholesome beverage
Which they are filled withal. I like, myself,
To sip a little of it.

BUTLER.

Dainty dear!
No doubt thou dost; aught stronger would offend thee.
Thou would'st, I think, call rue or wormwood sweet,
Were it the fashion in your town of Edinburgh.
But, hark! the bridal folks are at the door;
We must not parley longer. [*Music without.*]
I hear their piper playing the "Good-night."

Enter ALLEN.

BUTLER.

They are at hand, I hear: and have ye had
A merry evening, Allen?

ALLEN.

That we have.
Dunarden danced with that sweet Lowland lady,
As though it made him twenty years the younger.

HOUSEKEEPER.

Dunarden! Danced she not with young Dunarden,
Who is, so says report, her destined husband?

ALLEN.

Yes; at the end, for one dull reel or two
They footed it together. But, believe me,
If this rich Provost's daughter be not satisfied
With being wooed by substitute, which homage
The old laird offers her abundantly,
She'll ne'er be lady of this mansion; no,
Nor of her many, many thousand marks,
One golden piece enrich Dunarden's house.

HOUSEKEEPER.

Woe's me! our Malcolm is a wilful youth!
And Lady Achinmore would dance with Claude?

ALLEN.

She danced with him, and with the bridegroom also.

HOUSEKEEPER.

That, too, would be a match of furtherance
To the prosperity of our old house.

BUTLER.

But that she is a widow, and, I reckon,
Some years his elder, it might likely be.

HOUSEKEEPER.

And why should that be such a mighty hindrance?

ALLEN.

Fie, Butler! dost thou utter, in such presence,
Disqualifying words of age and widowhood?

HOUSEKEEPER.

You are mislearn'd and saucy, both of you.—
But now they are at hand.

Song without, of several Voices.

The sun is down, and time gone by,
The stars are twinkling in the sky,
Nor torch nor taper longer may
Eke out a blythe but stinted day;
The hours have pass'd with stealthy flight,
We needs must part: good night, good night!

The bride unto her bower is sent,
And ribald song and jesting spent;
The lover's whisper'd words and few
Have bade the bashful maid adieu;
The dancing floor is silent quite,
No foot bounds there: good night, good night!

The lady in her curtain'd bed,
The herdsman in his wattled shed,
The clansmen in the heather'd hall,
Sweet sleep be with you, one and all!
We part in hopes of days as bright
As this gone by: good night, good night!

Sweet sleep be with us, one and all!
And if upon its stillness fall
The visions of a busy brain,
We'll have our pleasure o'er again,
To warm the heart, to charm the sight,
Gay dreams to all! good night, good night!

HOUSEKEEPER.

We've listened here too long: go all of you
And get the rooms prepared. My head's distracted! [*Exeunt all, different ways.*

SCENE IV.

A Bed-chamber.

Enter ALICE *and* MARIAN, *with a* Servant *before them, carrying lights.*

MARIAN.

You must be tired with all this noisy merriment
So closely following a lengthen'd journey.

ALICE.

To be amongst the happy and the kind
Keeps weariness at bay; and yet I own
I shall be glad to rest.

MARIAN.

And may you find it, sound and undisturb'd!
There is among our household damsels here,

A humble friend of yours, the child of one
Who was your father's servant.

ALICE.

Ha! little Jessie, once my playfellow,
And since well known to me, as the attendant
Of a relation, in whose house I found her,
Some two years past: a gentle, faithful creature.

MARIAN.

The same. She will attend upon you gladly,
And do what you require.—See, here she is.

Enter JESSIE.

ALICE.

Jessie, my old acquaintance! I am glad
To find thee thus, domesticated happily
In such a home. I hope thou hast been well,
Since I last met with thee.

JESSIE.

I thank you, Madam;
I am right well; and, were I otherwise,
To see you here would make me well again.

MARIAN (*to* ALICE).

The greatest kindness I can show thee now,
Is to retire, and leave thee to prepare
For what thou need'st so much. (*Kissing her.*)
May sweet sound sleep refresh thee! Oh! it
grieves me

To think that we must part with thee so soon;
And that ye are determined to return
To that infected city.

ALICE.

Be not afraid for us. We shall pass through it,
And only tarry for an hour or two.
Good night, and thanks for all your gentle kindness!
Thanks, in few words, but from my inmost heart.
[*Exit* MARIAN.
And thou art here, good Jessie. I am glad,—
Right glad to see thee; but I'm tired and spent,
And (take it not unkindly) cannot speak
As I was wont to do.

(*Throws herself into a chair, whilst* JESSIE *begins to uncoil her hair, and take out the ornaments.*)

JESSIE.

I will prepare you for your bed, dear Madam,
As quickly as I can. To-morrow morning
Your strength and spirits too will be restored.

ALICE.

Thou 'rt a good creature. Dost thou still remember
The pretty songs thou used to sing so sweetly?

SONG.

JESSIE (*singing gaily*).

My heart is light, my limbs are light,
My purse is light, my dear;
Yet follow me, my maiden bright,
In faith! thou need'st not fear.

The wallet on a rover's back
Is scanty dower for thee,
But we shall have what lordies lack
For all their golden fee.

The plume upon my bonnet bound,
And broadsword by my side,
We'll follow to the war-pipe's sound,
With fortune for our guide.

Light are my limbs, my purse, my heart,
Yet follow me, my dear;
Bid Care good-bye, with kinsfolk part;
In faith! thou need'st not fear.

ALICE.

I thank thee: that was once a favourite song.
I know not how it was; I liked it then
For the gay reckless spirit of the tune.
But there is one which I remember well,
One my poor aunt was wont to bid thee sing;
Let me have that, I pray thee.

SONG.

They who may tell love's wistful tale,
Of half its cares are lighten'd;
Their bark is tacking to the gale,
The sever'd cloud is brighten'd.

Love like the silent stream is found
Beneath the willows lurking,
The deeper, that it hath no sound
To tell its ceaseless working.

Submit, my heart; thy lot is cast,
I feel its inward token;
I feel this mis'ry will not last,
Yet last till thou art broken.

ALICE.

Thou singest sweetly, ay, and sadly too,
Even as it should be sung. I thank thee, Jessie.

JESSIE (*after having entirely undone her hair, and taken the fastenings from other parts of her dress*).

Now, Madam, let me fetch your gown and coif.

ALICE.

I want no further service, my good Jessie,
I'll do the rest myself: and so, good night;
I shall be soon in bed. Good night, and thanks!

JESSIE.

Not yet good night; I will return again,
And take away the light.

ALICE.

Well; as thou wilt: but leave me for a while.
[*Exit* JESSIE.
This day, with all its trials, is at length
Come to an end. My wrung and wrestling heart!
How is it with thee now? Thy fond delusions
Lie strew'd and broken round thee, like the wrecks
Of western clouds when the bright sun is set.
We look upon them glowing in his blaze,
And sloping wood, and purple promontory,
And castled rock distinctly charm the eye:
What now remains but a few streaky fragments
Of melting vapour, cold and colourless?
(*After a thoughtful pause.*)
There's rest when hope is gone—there should be rest.
And when I think of her who is the cause,
Should I complain? To be preferr'd to her!
Preferr'd to Emma Graham, whom I myself
Cannot behold but with an admiration
That sinks into the heart, and in the fancy
Goes hand in hand with every gentle virtue
That woman may possess or man desire!—
The thought was childish imbecility.
Away, away! I will not weep for this.
Heaven granting me the grace for which I'll pray
Humbly and earnestly, I shall recover

From this sad state of weakness. If she love
him,
She 'll make him happier far than I could do;
And if she love him not, there is good cause
That I should pity him; not selfishly
On my own misery dwell. — Ay, this should be;
But will it be? — Oh, these rebellious tears!
(*Covering her face with her hands, and throwing herself back in her chair, in a state of abandonment*).

Enter, by the other end of the chamber, the Phantom *of a beautiful young Woman, which advances a few paces, and then remains still.*

ALICE (*raising her face*).

Who 's there? — Is there true vision in mine
eyes? (*Rising quickly, and going with open arms towards the* Phantom.)
Dear Emma! dear, dear Emma! how is this,
That thou art here, unlook'd for at this hour,
So many miles from home? Alas! that face
Of ghastly paleness, and that alter'd look
Of sad solemnity! — Speak to me quickly;
I dare approach no nearer, till I hear
Words of thy natural voice. Art thou alive?

PHANTOM.

A term, short as the passing of a thought,

Hath brought me from the chamber where my friends
Are now lamenting round my lifeless body.

ALICE.

And 't is thy spirit which before mine eyes
Thy body's semblance wears: and thou art nothing
That mortal hands may touch or arms encircle!
O look not on me with that fixed look!
Thou lov'st me still, else thou hadst not been here,
And yet I fear thee.

PHANTOM.

Fear me not, dear Alice!
I yearn'd to look upon thee ere I pass
That gulf which parts the living from the dead:
And I have words to utter which thine ear
Must listen to, thy mind retain distinctly.

ALICE.

Say what thou wilt; thou art a blessed spirit,
And cannot do me harm. —
I know it well: but let thy words be few;
The fears of nature are increasing on me.
(*Bending one knee to the ground.*)
O God! Lord of all beings, dead and living!
Strengthen and keep me in this awful hour!

PHANTOM.

And to thy fervent prayer I say, Amen.

Let this assure thee, that, though diff'rent
natures
Invest us now, we are the children still
Of one great Parent; thou in mortal weeds
Of flesh and blood; I in a state inexplicable
To human comprehension. — Hear my words.

ALICE.

I listen most intently.

PHANTOM.

The room in which I died, hath a recess
Conceal'd behind the arras, long disused
And now forgotten; in it stands a casket,
The clam shell of our house is traced upon it;
Open, and read the paper therein lodged.
When my poor body is to earth committed,
Do this without delay. And now, farewell!
I must depart.

ALICE.

Ah! whither, dearest Emma? Will a moment
Transport thee to Heaven's court of blessedness,
To extasy and glory?

PHANTOM.

These are presumptuous words. My place,
appointed
In mercy to a weak and sinful creature,

I soon shall know. Farewell, till we shall meet,
From sin, and fear, and doubt released for ever!
[*Exit.*

[ALICE *stands trembling and gazing, as the* Phantom *disappears, and then falls on the ground in a swoon. Presently re-enter* JESSIE.]

JESSIE.

Mercy upon us! lying on the ground!
Life is not gone; God grant it be not so!
Lady, dear lady! No; she does not hear.
(*Endeavours in vain to raise her, then runs off in great alarm, and is heard without, knocking and calling at the door of another chamber.*)
(*Without.*) Open the door! Rise, Lady Achinmore.

MARIAN (*without*).

I am not yet undress'd: what is the matter?

JESSIE (*without*).

Come to the lady's chamber: follow me.

MALCOLM (*without, opening the door of his apartment*).

What has befallen? Is any one unwell?

Re-enter JESSIE, *followed by* MARIAN, *who both run to* ALICE, *raising her from the floor, and one supporting her head, while the other chafes her temples and the palms of her hands, &c.*

MARIAN.

Support her drooping head, whilst from my closet
I fetch some water, and restoring drugs,
Whose potent smell revives suspended life.

MALCOLM (*looking in upon them from the door*).

O leave her not! I'll find whate'er is wanting.
[*Exit.*

MARIAN.

There is a little motion of her lip;
Her bosom heaves: thank God! life is not fled.
How long hadst thou been absent from the room?

JESSIE.

Some little time; and thought, on my return,
To find her gone to bed.

MARIAN.

How was she when thou left'st her?

JESSIE.

She was well then.

MARIAN.

It hath been very sudden.

Re-enter MALCOLM, *with phials, &c.*

MALCOLM (*applying herbs to her nostrils, while* MARIAN *pours out essence from the phial, and rubs her temples and hands*).

Life is returning; she is laid uneasily;
Let me support her on a stronger arm. (*Taking her from* MARIAN, *and supporting her.*)
There's motion on her lips, and on her eyelids.
Her eyes begin, through their soft raven lashes,
To peer like dew-drops from the harebell's core,
As the warm air of day by slow degrees
The closed leaves gently sever.—Yes; she moves.
How art thou now, sweet Alice?

MARIAN.

See, she looks up, and gazes on us too;
But, oh, how strangely!

MALCOLM.

Why do her eyes thus wander round the chamber?
(*To* ALICE.) Whom dost thou seek for, Alice?

ALICE.

She's gone; I need not look; a mortal eye
Shall never, never look on her again.
[*A peal of thunder heard.*]
Hear ye that sound? She is upon her way.

MARIAN.

What does she mean? It was a sultry night,
And threaten'd storm and lightning.

MALCOLM (*to* ALICE).

Thou 'st been asleep, and scarcely yet art waking,
Thy fancy is still busied with its dream.

ALICE (*raising herself more, and looking towards the place where the* Phantom *disappeared*).

It was no dream: upon that spot it stood;
I saw it,—saw it for a lengthen'd time,—
Saw it distinctively.

MALCOLM.

Whom didst thou see?
No living creature could have enter'd here.

ALICE.

O would that it had been a living creature!
Her beauty was the beauty of a corse
Newly composed in death; yet her dark eyes
Were open, gazing wistfully upon me.

MALCOLM (*hastily withdrawing his arms from her, and clasping his hands together in agony*).

Thou hast seen Emma Graham!

ALICE (*rousing herself*).

Is Malcolm here? I am confused,—bewilder'd;
I know not what I've seen, or what I've said:
Perhaps it was a dream.

MALCOLM.

It was no dream;
Or if it was, 't was one of sad import.
Oh, if it be!—— there is distraction in it.
(*Tossing his arms, &c.*)

MARIAN.

Dear brother! such wild gestures of despair,
For the mere shapings of a sleepy brain!

MALCOLM.

It was not sleep from which we have revived her.

MARIAN.

And grant it were not, swooning, I've been told,
Will sometimes have its dream as well as sleep.

ALICE.

I was not well; I have been long unwell;
Weakness and wretchedness disturb the brain;
Perhaps it was the vision of a swoon.
Be not so miserable, gentle Malcolm!
O that this vision did foretell my death,
If she were well and happy!

MALCOLM.

Forgive me, dearest Alice! O, forgive me!
When paining thee, I'm hateful to myself.
(*Taking both her hands, which he presses to his lips.*)

MARIAN.

Leave us, dear brother! go to thine apartment.

MALCOLM.

I'll go where yearning nature urges me.
(*Going, then returning again to* ALICE.)
And didst thou hear her voice?

Enter CLAUDE.

CLAUDE.

Is Alice well? I heard a busy noise.
How art thou, sister?

ALICE.

I have had a swoon,
But am recover'd from it. Go to rest.
(*Aside to* MARIAN *and* MALCOLM.)
Say nothing of the vision. O, be silent!

MALCOLM (*aside, to himself, as he goes off*).

Is he so much concern'd? No, no, he is not:
He does not, — cannot feel what tortures me.

CLAUDE.

Dost thou avoid me, Malcolm? Dost thou think
That kindness to my sister can offend me?

MALCOLM.

I've other thoughts, which do no wrong to thee,
And owe thee no account. [*Exit.*

CLAUDE (*aside*).

He is offended. (*Aloud to* MARIAN.) Thanks to
you, dear madam!
For your kind care of Alice. Rest, I hope,
Will perfectly restore her. The fatigue
Of her long journey, and the evening pastime
Has been too much for one so delicate.
(*To* ALICE.)
Undress and go to bed, poor harass'd creature!
I trust to-morrow thou wilt wake refresh'd.

ALICE.

I hope so too, dear Claude; and so good night.
Remain no longer here. [*Exit* CLAUDE.] I 'm
glad he 's gone.
[*A peal of thunder as before.*]
That awful sound again! she 's on her way:
But storm or thunderbolt can do no harm
To disembodied spirits.

MARIAN.

I may not leave thee here, my gentle friend;
In my apartment thou shalt pass the night.
Come then with me: I dare not leave thee here,
Where, sleeping or awake, thou hast received
Some painful shock.—Rise: lean upon my arm.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

A rudely paved Court, with a low Building in front. The Stage perfectly dark, and thunder heard at a distance.

Enter MALCOLM, *who goes to the door of the building, and knocks.*

MALCOLM.

Ho! Culloch! art thou waking? Rouse thee,
Culloch!
I hear him snoring in his heavy sleep,

Press'd with the glutton feasting of the day.
(*Knocking louder than before.*)
Canst thou not hear? Holla! ho! rouse thee, Culloch!
The heavy sluggard! — Ha! he's stirring now.
(*Laying his ear close to the door.*)

CULLOCH (*within*).
Who 's there?

MALCOLM.
It is thy master?

CULLOCH.
What is wanted?
It is not morning yet.

MALCOLM.
That drawling voice!
He is not yet awake. (*Very loud.*) Rise, man, immediately:
Open the door, and do what I desire thee.
(*To himself, after a short pause.*)
Six hours upon my gallant steed will end
This agony of doubt. — I 'll know my fate —
Joy or despair. —— He is asleep again.
(*Knocking as before.*)
Make haste, make haste, I say! inert and sluggish!
O that, like spirits, on the tempest borne,
The transit could be made! Alas! alas!
If what I fear hath happen'd, speed or stillness,

Or day or midnight,—every circumstance
Of mortal being will to me be nothing.
Not ready yet!— Ha! now I see the light.
(*Light seen from the window.*)
Six hours of my brave steed, and if my fears
Are then confirm'd—forgive me, noble creature!
We'll lay our burdens down and die together.

(*Enter* CULLOCH *slowly from the building, rubbing his eyes with one hand, and holding a candle in the other.*)
Haste, tardy creature! art thou sleeping still?

CULLOCH.

What is your honour's will? O hone! O hone!
It is a murky night.

MALCOLM.

I know it is.
Unlock the stable door, and saddle quickly
My gallant Oscar. (*Thunder again.*)

CULLOCH.

Does your honour hear it?

MALCOLM.

Hear what?

CULLOCH.

The thunder growling o'er Benmore:
And that was lightning too that flared so fleetly:
The welkin's black as pitch.

MALCOLM.

And let it growl; and be the welkin pall'd
In sackcloth! To the spot where I am going
We 'll find the way by instinct. — Linger not:
Do what I have desired thee instantly.

CULLOCH.

Ay, ay! the saddle upon Oscar's back.
The bran new saddle would your honour have?

MALCOLM.

Yes, fool, and set about it instantly.

[*Exit* CULLOCH.

These dark and heavy bodings of my mind
Come from no natural bent of apprehension.
It must be so. Yet, be it dream or vision,
Unmeaning chance, or preternatural notice,
As oft hath been vouchsafed, if living seers
Or old tradition lie not,—this uncertainty
Ere morning dawn would drive my brain distracted,
Were I inactively to wait for day;
Therefore, to horse!

(*Thunder louder than before.*)

That sound is in accordance with the storm
In this perturbed breast. Is it not ominous
Of that which soon shall strike me to the dust,
A blasted lonely remnant? —
Methinks he should ere this — time flies apace;
The listless sluggard must be urged to hasten
His so unwilling task. [*Exit hastily.*

ACT II.

SCENE I. — *The Cross of Glasgow. A great crowd of people are discovered, and bells heard tolling occasionally from the neighbouring churches.*

FIRST CROWD.

Ah! woe is me! so bonnie and so young!
Of all that death hath ta'en in this fell ravage,
None hath he ta'en that seem'd so ill to suit
The coffin and the mould. Ah! woe is me!

SECOND CROWD.

Ay, neighbour, she was one mark'd from them all.
Though we have many fair and gracious ladies,
We had not one who could be pair'd with her:
The bonniest lass in all the west of Scotland.

FIRST CROWD.

Ay, thou may'st say, the bonniest and the best.

THIRD CROWD.

Nay, softly, David! for the point of goodness,
That is a matter, on her burial day,
We may not question; yet, if it be true ——

FIRST CROWD.

If it be true! It is not: nought is true
That can throw speck or spot upon her virtue.

FIRST CROWD WOMAN (*to* FIRST CROWD).

Be not so angry, man; my husband means
Against her maiden virtue no reproach,
Ev'n if her faith was papishly inclined.

FIRST CROWD.

She was no Papish; I'll take oath upon it.
The cloven foot of Satan in my shoe
Is at this point of time as surely buckled,
As that she was aught but a pure believer, —
A good and godly lady.

FIRST CROWD WOMAN.

That gentleman, so brave and soldierly,
Who lately has return'd from foreign wars,
Is a rank Romanist, and has been oft
Received by her. But, Lord preserve us all!
We, by God's grace, may sit by Satan's side, —
Ay, on the self-same settle, yet, the while,
Be ne'er one whit the worse.

THIRD CROWD.

And I should guess ——

SECOND CROWD.

Hist, hist! the funeral's coming:
I hear the heavy wheels, and o'er the top
Of all those cluster'd heads I see the feathers, —

The snow-white feathers of the high-coped hearse
Move slowly. Woe the day! oh, woe the day!
How changed her state! She was on milk-white steed
Mounted right gallantly, with cap and plume,
When I beheld her last.

VOICE (*without*).

Make way, good folks, and let the ladies pass.

SECOND CROWD (*to him without*).

None can pass here on horseback.

VOICE (*without*).

It is the Provost's family: make way.

SECOND CROWD (*as before*).

An 'twere the king's, they must dismount, I trow,
Or wait till the procession be gone by.

Enter ALICE, MARIAN, *and* CLAUDE.

CLAUDE (*to* CROWD).

What makes so great a concourse? and those bells
To toll so dismally? Whose funeral
Are ye convened to see?

FIRST CROWD.

Ah, Sir! the fairest lady of the place.
I warrant you have seen her many a time;
They call'd her Emma Graham.

CLAUDE.

It cannot be! What didst thou call her? Speak;
Repeat her name.

FIRST CROWD.

Her name is Emma Graham; her father is——

CLAUDE.

No more! no more! too well I comprehend it.
And death hath dealt his blow on what was life's
Completest, dearest, best.
(*Covers his face with his cloak.*)

MARIAN (*turning to* ALICE, *and supporting her*).

Dear Alice, thou art pale, and faint, and ill:
Lean upon me, my friend.

ALICE.

Think not of me: poor Claude! my heart-struck
brother!
His wound is deep and sudden: for this stroke
I was prepared.

VOICES (*without*).

Stand back; stand closer: it is now at hand.
[*A funeral procession crosses the Stage; the Mourners following the hearse on foot.*]

FIRST CROWD.

Ah! never corse was follow'd to the grave
With deeper sorrow!

FIRST CROWD WOMAN.

Ay, tears are following tears down manly cheeks,

As *gouts* fall in Saint Mungo's dripping aisle,
Near which the grave is dug that shall receive her.

FIRST CROWD.

That is her grey-hair'd father, so bow'd down;
And those her brothers walking by his side.

SECOND CROWD.

Then all the kindred walking, two and two.

THIRD CROWD.

But who is he that follows after all,
In mourner's cloak so muffled to the eyes?
He walks alone, not mated like the rest;
And yet, methinks, his gait and motion say
The greatest weight of grief falls to his share.

CLAUDE.

God knows who hath the greatest share! Not he. (*Pushing eagerly through the crowd.*)

ALICE.

Where goest thou, Claude? (*Endeavouring to hold him.*)

CLAUDE.

Prevent me not. Shall mourning weeds alone
Have privilege, and sorrow be debarr'd.

[*Exit hastily after the funeral, and the crowd disperses different ways,* ALICE, MARIAN, *and their Servants alone occupying the front of the Stage.*

MARIAN.

Dear Alice! how thou tremblest every limb,
As in an ague fit!

ALICE.

It was no dream;
It was no strong delusion of the fancy.

MARIAN.

This is indeed an awful confirmation.
But stay no longer here: go to thy home;
Thou hast great need of rest.

ALICE.

I have more need,
Within my closet, on my bended knees,
To pray for mercy on my sinful self,
And those to me most dear,—poor sinners all.
This is a sad and awful visitation.

MARIAN.

But didst thou not expect to find it so?
I thought thou wert prepared.

ALICE.

I thought so too;
But certainty makes previous expectation
Seem, by comparison, a state of hope.

MARIAN.

We now are free to hold upon our way.
Let us proceed: come on with me, dear Alice.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The House of the PROVOST, *and the Apartment of* CLAUDE, *who enters, followed by* CRAWFORD, *and throws himself back into a chair with the action of deep distress.*

CLAUDE.

Follow me not, my friend; it is in vain
That friendly soothing would assuage my grief.

CRAWFORD.

Grieve not for that which is, indeed, most grievous,
Beyond all measure.

CLAUDE.

Can we measure grief,
And say, So much of it shall be my portion,
And only this? A prudent, lesson'd sorrow,
Usurps the name it bears. — She was the light
That brighten'd every object; made this world
A place worth living in. This beauteous flame
Hath in the socket sunk: I am in darkness,
And no returning ray shall cheer my sight.
This earth, and every thing that it contains,
Is a dull blank around me.

CRAWFORD.

Say not so!
It grieves my heart to hear thee. Say not so.

CLAUDE.

I will not grieve thee then; I'll hold my tongue;
But shall I feel the less?—Oh, had she lived!

CRAWFORD.

Perhaps she had but caused thee greater sorrow;
For how would'st thou have brook'd to see her hand,
Had it so been, bestow'd upon another?

CLAUDE.

Why should I entertain a thought so painful?
(*Raising his head proudly, after a thoughtful pause.*)
Yes, I can entertain it, and believe
That, even as another's, it were happiness
To see her yet alive; to see her still
Looking as never eyes but hers did look;
Speaking such words as she alone could speak,
Whose soften'd sounds thrill'd through the nerves, and dwelt,
When heard no more, on the delighted fancy,
Like chanted sweetness!—All is now extinct!—
Like some base thing, unmeet for mortal eye,
The sod hath cover'd all. (*After a thoughtful pause.*) Hath cover'd all!

CRAWFORD.

Dear Claude! why wilt thou dwell on things so dismal?
Let me read to thee from some pious book;
Wilt thou permit me? (*He remains silent and thoughtful.*) Dost thou hear me, Claude?

CLAUDE (*muttering to himself, without attending to* CRAWFORD).

The sexton has the key; and if he had not,
The wall may yet be clear'd. —
The banded mourners scatter to their homes,
Where kinsfolk meet, and social hearths blaze bright,
And leave the grave in midnight loneliness;
But should it be?

CRAWFORD (*listening to him*).

I understand these words:
But if he go, he shall not go alone.

Enter a Servant.

CLAUDE (*impatiently*).

What brings thee here?

SERVANT.

A gentleman desires to see you, Sir.

CLAUDE.

Tell him I am gone forth.—Such ill-timed visits!
Is the sore heart a sear'd and harden'd thing
For every fool to handle? [*Exit.*

CRAWFORD.

I'll follow him: he should not be alone.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A large Room, with rich furniture, and the walls hung with pictures.

Enter the PROVOST *and* MARIAN, *by different doors.*

PROVOST.

How is poor Alice?

MARIAN.

She is more composed;
For tears have flow'd uncheck'd, and have relieved her.
I have persuaded her to take an hour
Of needful rest upon her bed; and Jessie,
That kindly creature, watches her the while.

PROVOST.

Ay, that is right. And now, my right good lady,
Let me in plain but grateful words repeat,
That your great kindness, leaving thus your home,
And taking such a journey for the comfort
Of my poor child, is felt by me most truly,
As it deserves. May God reward you for it!

MARIAN.

I will not, Sir, receive such thanks unqualified;
They are not due to me. Regard for Alice, —
And who that knows her feels not such regard, —
Was closely blended with another motive,
When I determined on this sudden journey.

PROVOST.

Another motive!

MARIAN.

Has not Claude inform'd you,
That Malcolm left Dunarden secretly,
The night before we did ourselves set forth?

PROVOST.

He has not. Ha! and wot you where he went?

MARIAN.

I wot not, but I guess: and it was he,
As I am almost confident, who walk'd
The last of all the mourners, by himself,
In this day's sad procession.

PROVOST (*pulling a letter hastily from his pocket*).
Madam, sit down; I 'll cast mine eyes again
O'er this your father's letter. Pray sit down!
I may not see you thus. (*Setting a chair with much courtesy, and obliging her to sit, whilst he goes aside and reads a letter earnestly. He then returns to her.*)
My friend has many words of courtesy;
It is his habit; but subtracting from them
The plain unvarnish'd sense, and thereto adding
What, from this secret journey of your brother,
May be inferr'd,—the real truth is this—
At least it so appears to my poor reason—
(*Preventing her as she rises from her seat.*)
Nay, sit, I pray you, Lady Auchinmore;
We 'll talk this matter over thoroughly,
And leave no bashful doubts hid in a corner,
For lack of honest courage to produce them.
(*Sits down by her.*)

MARIAN.
Proceed, good Sir, I listen earnestly.

PROVOST.
As it appears to me, the truth is this,
That Malcolm, whom your father doth admit,
Albeit a great admirer of my daughter,
To be at present somewhat disinclined
To give up youthful liberty so early,
As he from more acquaintance with her virtues

Ere long will of his own accord desire,—
(*Pointing to the letter.*) — so he expresses it.

MARIAN.

And with sincerity.

PROVOST.

Well, grant it, Lady!
The truth doth ne'ertheless appear to be,
That this young gallant, Malcolm of Dunarden,
With all her virtues, loves not Alice Denison,
And loves another.

MARIAN.

Rather say, *hath* loved.

PROVOST.

I 'll not unsay my words. His heart is with her,
Low as she lies: and she who won his heart
From such a maid as Alice Denison,
Will keep it too, ev'n in her shroud. No, no!
We've spread our vaunting sails against the wind,
And cannot reach our port but with such peril
As will o'ermatch the vantage.

MARIAN.

Say not so.
Time will make all things as we wish to have them.

PROVOST.

Time works rare changes, which they may abide
Who are intent upon them. Shall I carry
My vessel where her cargo is not wanted? —

Tobacco to th' Antipodes, and wait
Till they have learnt to use and relish it? —
Shall I do this, when other marts are near,
With open harbours ready to receive her?

MARIAN.

Dear Sir, you must not think I will assent
To what would mar the long and cherish'd wish
Of me and mine. And we had fondly hoped
That you had been desirous of this union
Between our families.

PROVOST.

Your father won my friendship years ago,
When with his goodly mien and belted plaid,
His merry courtesy and stately step,
He moved amongst our burghers at the Cross,
As though he had been chieftain o'er us all;
And I have since enjoy'd his hospitality,
In his proud mountain hold.

MARIAN.

I recollect it: proud and glad he was
Of such a guest.

PROVOST.

Dost thou? Ay, then it was,
That, seeing his fair stripling by his side —
A graceful creature, full of honest sense
And manly courage — I did like the notion,
That Alice, then a little skipping child,
With years before her still to play about me,

Should in some future time become the lady
Of that young Highland chief. But years bring thoughts
Of a more sober and domestic hue.
Why should I covet distant vanities,
And banish from my sight its dearest object?
(*Rising from his chair.*) Have you observed those pictures?

MARIAN (*rising also*).

I have. They are the portraits of your parents:
Their features bear resemblance to your own.

PROVOST.

My mother's do: and look at her, dear Madam!
With all the bravery of that satin dress
Clasp'd up with jewels, and those roses stuck
Amongst her braided hair, she was the daughter
And sober heiress of a saving burgher,
Whose hoarded pelf in my brave father's hands
Raised such industrious stir in this good city,
As changed her from a haunt of listless sluggards
To the fair town she is. What need have I
To eke my consequence with foreign matches?
Alice shall wed, I hope, some prosperous merchant,
And live contentedly, my next door neighbour,
With all her imps about her.

MARIAN.

Wed whom she may, I hope she will be happy.

PROVOST.

I do believe that is your hearty wish:
And having plainly told you what I think
Of this projected match, as it concerns
My daughter and myself,— I will proceed
To that which may concern my ancient friend.
Should any mortgage press on his estate,
Or any purchase of adjoining lands
Make money a desired object with him,
He need but speak the word; at easy int'rest
He shall receive what sums he may require,
And need not fear that I shall e'er distress him
With hard ill-timed demands. In faith, he need not!

MARIAN.

Dear Sir, he knows full well your gen'rous heart
Hath for its minister a liberal hand:
In truth, he would not fear to be your debtor.

PROVOST.

Not all the rum and sugar of Jamaica,
In one huge warehouse stored, should make me press him,
Though apt occasion offer'd e'er so temptingly.
Then why should Malcolm bend his youthful neck
To wedlock's yoke for sordid purposes?
The boy shall be my friend; and when his mind
Is free to think upon another love,
I'll guide him to a very comely lady —

Yea, more than one, that he may have a choice—
Who may prove both a match of love and profit;
But, hear you plainly, not to Alice Denison.

MARIAN.

Oh, you are kind and noble! but my father——

PROVOST.

Say nought for him; he'll answer for himself:
And through his maze of friendly compliments,
I'll trace at last his veritable thoughts.
(*Taking her hand kindly.*)
Now, having thus so plainly told my mind,
Look on me as a man to whom again
You may as freely speak.

MARIAN.

And so I will:
The happiness of one, dear to us both,
Requires that I should do it.

PROVOST (*surprised*).

How so? is it of Alice you would speak?

MARIAN.

Yes, but another time; for here comes Jessie.

Enter JESSIE.

(*To* JESSIE.) How is she now? I hope she is asleep.

JESSIE.

She has not slept, but lies composed and easy,
And wishes now to see you. [*Exit* MARIAN.

PROVOST.

How art thou, Jessie?

JESSIE.

Well, an' please your honour.

PROVOST.

I hear thou hast become a Highland lass;
But, if thou really like the Lowlands better,
Thy native country, tell me honestly:
I'll make thy husband, whomsoe'er thou choose,
A freeman of this town. If he have brains,
And some few marks beside, he'll thrive upon it.

JESSIE.

I thank you, Sir; his marks are few indeed.

PROVOST.

Well, never mind; let us but have the brains,
And we will make the best of it.—Poor Jessie!
I well remember thee a barefoot girl,
With all thy yellow hair bound in a snood.
Thy father too.

JESSIE.

Do you remember him?

PROVOST.

Yes, Saunders Fairlie. Better man than Saunders
In factory or warehouse never bustled.

Enter Servant.

PROVOST.

What is the matter, Archy? On thy face
Thou wear'st a curious grin: what is the matter?

SERVANT.

The baillie bid me to inform your honour,
The country hucksters and the market wives
Have quarrell'd, and are now at deadly strife,
With all the brats and schoolboys of the town
Shouting and bawling round them.

PROVOST.

Good sooth! whene'er those wives with hands and tongue
Join in the fray, the matter must be look'd to.
I will be with them soon.

[*Exit* Servant.

To think now of those creatures!
Ev'n at the time when death is in the city
Doing his awful work, and our sad streets
Blacken'd with funerals, that they must quarrel
About their worldly fractions! Woe is me!
For all our preachings and our Sabbath worship,
We are, I fear, but an ungodly race.

Enter another Servant.

And what has brought thee, too?

SERVANT.

There is a woman come from Anderston,
Whose neighbour, on pretence of some false debt,
Has puin'd her good milch cow,—her only cow.

PROVOST.

Is that a case to occupy my time?
Let her go with it to the younger baillie.

SERVANT.

I told her so, your honour, but she weeps,
And says the younger baillie is so proud,
She dare not speak to him.

PROVOST.

Poor simpleton! Well then, I needs must see her.

Re-enter First Servant.

Tut! here again! What is the matter now?

FIRST SERVANT.

A servant all cross'd o'er wi' livery lace,
As proud and grand as any trumpeter,
Is straight from Blantyre come, and says, my Lord
Would greatly be obliged, if that your honour
Would put off hearing of that suit to-morrow,
As he must go to Edinburgh.

PROVOST.

Tell the messenger

To give my humble service to his lordship,
And say, I could not, but with great injustice
To the complaining party, grant delay,
Who, being poor, should not be further burden'd
With more attendance; I will therefore hear
The cause to-morrow, at the hour appointed.

Exit First, *and re-enter* Second Servant.

Still more demands! For what foul sin of mine
Was I promoted to this dignity?
From morn till eve, there is no peace for me.

[*Exit* PROVOST, *speaking to the* Servants *as they go out.*

SCENE IV.

Before the walls of a Churchyard, a narrow iron Gate at the bottom of the Stage, behind which the gleaming of a Torch is faintly seen; the front of the Stage entirely dark. Solemn Music is heard, as the Scene opens.

Enter a SEXTON, *with keys, followed by* CLAUDE *and* CRAWFORD.

CLAUDE.

Music! and from the spot! what may it be?

SEXTON.

Leave was requested that a solemn dirge
Should be this night sung by some grave; but whose,
Or e'en by whom requested, I am ignorant.
Some Papist, like enough: but what of that?

CRAWFORD (*to* SEXTON).

How many graves thou 'st made in one short week!
Thou hast been busy in thy sad vocation.

SEXTON.

I have, good sooth! and knew it would be so,
A month before the fell disease began.

CRAWFORD.

How knew it?

SEXTON.

He, the sighted man from Skye,
Was in the town; and, at the crowded cross,
Fell into strong convulsions, at the sight
Which there appear'd to him.

CRAWFORD.

What did he see?

SEXTON.

Merchants, and lairds, and deacons, making bargains,
And setting trystes, and joking carelessly,
Swathed in their shrouds; some to the very chin,
Some breast-high, others only to the loins.

It was a dismal, an appalling sight;
And when I heard of it, I knew right well
My busy time was coming.

CLAUDE (*to* SEXTON, *impatiently*).

Didst thou say
That leave has been requested for a dirge
To be this night sung by some Papist's grave?

SEXTON.

Papist or not I cannot surely say,
I ask'd no questions.

CRAWFORD.

Having cause, no doubt,
To be well satisfied no harm would ensue.

SEXTON.

No harm. In this retired nook it cannot
Annoy the living; and for the departed,
Nought can disturb their rest.

CRAWFORD.

Hast thou not heard of restless souls returning?
Perhaps thou 'st seen it, during thirty years
In which thou hast been sexton of this parish.

SEXTON.

In all that time I ne'er could say with certainty
That aught of such a nature pass'd before me;
But I have seen uncertain shadows move

As 't were confusedly, and heard strange sounds, —
Stranger than wind or natural cause could utter.

CRAWFORD.

And thou wert sure they were unnatural sounds?
And hast thou heard them often?

SEXTON.

Many times:
But that was in the first years of mine office.
I am not now alarm'd: use makes me feel
As if no harm could e'er befall the sexton:
And ev'n my wife will in dark winter nights
Enter the church alone and toll the bell.

CRAWFORD.

And ne'er has been alarm'd by any sight
Of apparition or unearthly thing?

SEXTON.

Yes; she was once alarm'd.

CRAWFORD (*eagerly*).

And what appear'd?

SEXTON.

It was, as nearly as I can remember,
Upon a Friday night——

CRAWFORD (*quickly*).

Ne'er mind the night: what was it that she saw?

SEXTON.

Nay, she herself saw nothing; but the dog
That follow'd her bark'd briskly, then stopp'd short,
And, with a kind of stifled choking howl,
Look'd in her face, and then cower'd by her side,
Trembling for fear; and then right well she knew
Some elrich thing was near her, though its form
Was only visible to the poor brute.

CRAWFORD.

You think the dog saw something.

SEXTON.

Certes did he!
And had he not been dumb, he could, no doubt,
Have told a tale to set our hair on end.

CLAUDE (*who, during their discourse, has been pacing to and fro impatiently, to* SEXTON).

You know not who it was?

SEXTON.

The Lord preserve us, Sir! for she saw nothing.

CLAUDE.

What dost thou mean? Could'st thou not guess, at least,
Who 't was who made request to chant the dirge?

SEXTON.

Ay, ay! the dirge. In truth I cannot say.
It was a man I never saw before.

CLAUDE (*eagerly*).

Stately, and of a stature somewhat taller
Than middle size, of countenance somewhat younger
Than middle age?

SEXTON.

No; short, and grave, and ancient, like a priest
From foreign parts. (*Music sounds again.*)

CRAWFORD.

Be still and hear the dirge.

Dirge, sung by several Voices without.

Dear spirit! freed from earthy cell,
From mortal thraldom freed;
The blessed Virgin keep thee well,
And thy dread passage speed!

Quick be thy progress, gentle soul!
Through purifying pain,
To the saved Christian's happy goal,
Thy Father's bright domain!

Beloved on earth! by love redeem'd,
Which earthly love transcends,
Earth's show,— the dream that thou hast dream'd,
In waking transport ends.

Then, bathed in fountains of delight,
May'st thou God's mercy prove,
His glory open'd to thy sight,
And to thy heart his love!

There may thy blessed dwelling be,
For ever to endure
With those who were on earth like thee,
The guileless and the pure!

Dear spirit! from thy earthy cell,
From mortal thraldom freed, &c. &c.

CLAUDE (*seeing the light disappear*).

They are all gone at last: unlock the gate.
(*The* SEXTON *applies the key, but in vain.*)
Canst thou not open it? what is the matter?

SEXTON.

I've brought a key made for another gate;
Woe worth my stupid head!

CLAUDE.

I'll climb the wall.

SEXTON.

Be not so very hasty, please your honour.
This key unlocks the southern gate: I pray you
To follow me, and you will soon have entrance.
Woe worth my stupid head! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.

The Churchyard, near the walls of St. Mungo's Church, which occupies the bottom of the Stage. A newly covered Grave is dimly seen near the front; the Stage darkened, but not entirely so; a degree of light, as from a new-risen moon in a cloudy night, showing objects imperfectly.

Enter MALCOLM, *who bends over the grave for some time in silence.*

MALCOLM.

And here beneath this trampled sod she lies,
Stiffen'd, and cold, and swathed in coffin-weeds,
Who, short while since, moved like a gleam of brightness,
Lighting each face, and cheering every heart.
Oh, Emma, Emma Graham, is this thy place?
Dearer than thee a lover's soul ne'er worshipp'd
Fairer than thee a virgin's robe ne'er wrapt;
Better than thee a parent's tongue ne'er bless'd.
Oh, Emma Graham, the dearest, fairest, best!
Pair'd with thee in the dance, this hand in thine,
I've led thee through the whirl of mazy transport,
And o'er thy chair have hung with wistful ear,
Catching thy words like strains of melody,
To be with fancy's treasures stored for ever.
I've waited near thy portal many an hour,

To see thy hasty transit from its steps
To the grim gaping coach, that seem'd to swallow,
Like a leviathan, its beauteous prey.
And now, alas! I come to seek thee here!
I come to seek thee here, but not to find.
This heart, which yearns through its ribb'd fence to break
Into the darken'd cell where thou art laid
In Nature's thraldom, is from thee divided
As by a gulf impassable. Oh, oh!
So short a time! such fearful, sad transition!
My day is turn'd to night; my youth to age;
May life to death be the next welcome change!
(*Throws himself on the grave in a burst of sorrow.*)
Sweet love, who sleep'st beneath, canst thou not hear me?
Oh, if thou couldst! Alas! alas! thou canst not!
(*After a pause, and half-raising himself from the grave.*)
But! is it well, and is it holy, thus,
On such a sacred spot, to mourn the dead,
As lost and perish'd treasure? God forgive me!
The silver lamp, with all its rich embossments
Of beauteous workmanship, is struck and broken,
But is the flame extinguish'd? God forgive me!
Forgive a wretched and distracted man,
And grant me better thoughts!—The unclothed spirit
In blessed purity hath still existence.

Perhaps, in its high state is not unconscious
Of what remains behind; perhaps, beholds
The very spot. Oh, if she does! her pity—
Her pity, yea, her love now rest upon me.
Her spirit, from the body newly freed,
Was in my father's house, ere it departed
To its celestial home; was it not sympathy?
O! Emma, Emma! could I surely know
That I was dear to thee, a word,—a token
Had been to me a cherish'd, rich possession,
Outvaluing all that martial chiefs contend for
On their embattled fields.—Ha! who approaches?

Enter CLAUDE.

Come not, I warn thee, near this sacred spot.
(*Springing up from the ground.*)

CLAUDE.

A sacred spot, indeed! but yet to all
Who loved in life the dead whom it contains,
Free as the house of God.

MALCOLM.

I say it is not.
In this, her first night of the grave, the man
Who loved her best when living, claims a right
To watch the new-closed tomb, and none beside.

CLAUDE.

Then yield to me that right, for it is mine;
For I have loved her longest,—long ere thou
Hadst look'd upon her face, or heard her name.

MALCOLM.

'T is not the date, but potency of love
Which bears account: I say, approach no nearer.

CLAUDE.

Must I endure such passion? Frantic man!
Are we not both in grief smitten to the earth?
May we not both weep o'er this sacred spot,
Partners in wretchedness?

MALCOLM.

Away, away! I own no partnership;
He who hath spoke such word hath thereby proved
The poorness of his love. Approach no nearer.
I'll yield my heart's blood rather than resign
This my sad eminence in widow'd sorrow.

CLAUDE.

Dar'st thou to hinder me?

MALCOLM.

I dare and will.
(*They grapple fiercely.*)

Enter CRAWFORD.

CRAWFORD (*separating them*).

For shame! for shame! to hold contention here!
Mutual affliction should make friends of foes,
Not foes of friends. The grave of one beloved

Should be respected ev'n as holy ground,—
Should have a charm to smother all resentment.

MALCOLM.

And so it should, and shall. — Forgive me, Claude;
I have been froward in my wretchedness.

CLAUDE.

And I, dear Malcolm, was to blame, so suddenly
To break upon thy sorrow.

CRAWFORD.

The provost hath despatch'd a messenger
Upon our track, who found me out ev'n now,
Requesting both of you to give your presence
On an occasion solemn and important.

CLAUDE.

What may it be?

CRAWFORD.

Within the late apartment of the dead,
Your sister has a duty to perform,
Enjoin'd her by the dead. And 't is her wish
That ye should both be present.

CLAUDE *and* MALCOLM (*together*).

We will obey her shortly. Go before us.

[*Exit* CRAWFORD *and* MALCOLM; *and* CLAUDE, *after bending in silence for a few moments over the grave, follows them.*

SCENE VI.

An Apartment, the walls of which are lined with oak, and partly hung with arras.

Enter a Maid Servant, *carrying a lamp and a basket, &c.*

MAID (*speaking as she enters*).

I trow, when we have burnt this second parcel,
The sickly air must needs be purified.
But what does all this fuming signify,
Since we must die at our appointed time?
What dost thou think — (*looking round and seeming alarmed*) — She has not followed me.
I thought she was behind me. Lord preserve us!
Here in this ghastly chamber all alone!
(*Going to the door and calling.*)
Art thou not coming, Marjory? Where art thou?
I say, where art thou? I have need of thee.

Enter a Second Maid.

SECOND MAID.

Why didst thou call so loud? What is the matter?

FIRST MAID.

I thought thou wert behind me: mercy on us!
A kind of qualm came o'er me, when I look'd
On all within this silent dismal room,
And to that corner where the death-bed stood,—
A sudden qualm came o'er me.

SECOND MAID.

Let us be busy — there 's no time to lose;
The provost and his daughter will be here
Ere we have done our work.

[*They take gums and dried herbs from the basket, which they set fire to by the lamp, and fumigate the chamber, speaking the while occasionally.*]

FIRST MAID.

The Lord preserve us! 't is an awful thing.

SECOND MAID.

It was a sudden call: so young, — so good!

FIRST MAID.

Ay, many a sore heart thinks of her this night.

SECOND MAID.

And he, the most of all, that noble gentleman:
Lord pardon him for being what he is!

FIRST MAID.

And what is that?

SECOND MAID.

A rank and Roman papist.

FIRST MAID.

The Lord forgive him that, if it be so! —
And quickly, too; for this same deadly fever,
As I hear say, has seized upon him also.

Enter PROVOST.

PROVOST.

That's well, good damsels; you have done your task
Right thoroughly: a wholesome, fragrant smell
Is floating all about. Where is your master?

FIRST MAID.

In his own chamber. When he knows your honour
Is in the house, he will attend you presently.

SECOND MAID.

And it will do him good to see your honour.

PROVOST.

I fear, my joe, the good that I can do him,
Or ev'n the minister, if he were here,
Would be but little. Grief must have its time.
Some opiate drug would be to him, I reckon,
Worth all my company, and something more.
Howbeit, I'll go to him. My good old friend!
My heart bleeds for him.—Ye have done enough;
The ladies are at hand.

[*Exit by the opposite side.*

Enter ALICE *and* MARIAN.

MARIAN.

Take hold of me; thy summon'd strength, I fear,
Forsakes thee now. (*She supports* ALICE, *and they walk slowly to the middle of the room.*)
Ay, thou look'st round, as if in search of something?

ALICE.

They have removed it.

MARIAN.

What have they removed?

ALICE.

The bed on which she lay. Oh, woe is me!
The last time I was in this chamber, Marian,
Becoming suddenly, from some slight cause,
A passing sufferer, she laid my head
On her own pillow, and her own soft hand
Press'd me so gently; I was then the patient,
And she the tender nurse. I little thought
So short a time——Alas! my dear, dear friend!

MARIAN.

Short time indeed for such a dismal change:
I may not chide thy tears.

ALICE.

Here are the virginals on which she play'd;

And here 's her music, too. (*Taking up a book from the virginals, and opening it.*) Ah, woe is me!
The very tune which last she played to me
Has open'd to my hand, and 'twixt the leaves
The little flower lies press'd which then I gave her!

MARIAN.

'T is sweet to find it so.

ALICE.

But, oh! how sad!
She was —— she was —— (*Bursting into tears.*)
Well may I weep for her!

MARIAN.

Be comforted, dear Alice! she is gone
Where neither pain nor woe can touch her more.

ALICE.

I know — I know it well: but she is gone!
She who was fair, and gifted, and beloved:
And so beloved! — Had it been Heaven's blest will
To take me in her stead, tears had been shed,
But what had been their woe, compared to this?

MARIAN.

Whose woe, dear Alice?

ALICE.

His woe—their woe; poor Claude's, and Malcolm's too.
Death seizes on the dearest and the best!

MARIAN (*embracing her*).

I will not hear thee say so, gentle Alice.
A dearer and a better than thyself
'T were hard to find. No; nor do I believe
That she whom thou lamentest did surpass thee.

ALICE.

Hush! say it not!—I pray thee, say not so:
In pitying me thou must not rob the dead.
That he preferr'd a creature of such excellence,
Took from the wound its sting and bitterness.
Thou may'st not wrong the dead!

MARIAN.

I will not, then.

ALICE (*looking round*).

There is the arras which conceals the place:
Her awful words are sounding in my ears,
Which bade me search. I feel a secret awe!
But that her spirit from the earth hath ta'en—
As I am well assured—its final leave,
I could believe that she is near me still,
To see the very act! (*Looking round her fearfully.*)

MARIAN.

Nay, check thy ardent fancy: 't is not good

To let such dismal notions haunt thee so —
Thy father comes, with his afflicted friend.

Enter PROVOST, *leading* GRAHAM *by the hand.*

[ALICE *advances affectionately to* GRAHAM, *who opens his arms to receive her, and she weeps upon his neck, without speaking. She then leads him to a chair, and seats herself upon a stool at his feet, taking his hand in hers, and bending over it, while the* PROVOST *and* MARIAN *remain in the front.*]

PROVOST (*looking at them*).

That poor old man! he utters not a word
Of sorrow or complaint; and all the more
I grieve for him. God help him! in whose hands
The hearts of men are kept.

MARIAN.

And he is help'd, for he is weeping now.

PROVOST.

He did not weep when we for him were weeping,
And he will weep when all our tears are dried.
— Our two young men, methinks, are long of coming.

MARIAN.

But are you sure your messenger hath found them?

PROVOST.

I scarcely doubt it. I have those in pay,
But little better than the prey they follow,
Who are expert in dogging stealthy rogues;
And it were strange indeed if artless men
Should foil their skill. ——
And I am right — I hear their coming steps!

Enter MALCOLM *and* CLAUDE.

MALCOLM (*after doing silent obeisance to the* PROVOST *and* GRAHAM, *who, with* ALICE, *comes forward to meet them, speaks in a low voice to* CLAUDE).

And here, night after night, in all her beauty,
She took her curtain'd rest, and here she died!
But that which I expected is not here:
Is this the very chamber?

ALICE (*overhearing him, and in a low voice*).

It is: but what thou look'st for is removed.
(*Pointing.*) Upon that spot it stood.

MALCOLM.

Yes, thou hast read my thought, most gentle Alice!

(*Goes to the spot, where he remains in silence, covering his face with his hands.*)

PROVOST.

Shall we not now proceed upon the business

For which we are convened?
(*To* GRAHAM.) To you, my ancient friend, I have explain'd it.
Malcolm and Claude, know ye why in this chamber
Your presence has been solemnly requested?

CLAUDE.

I guess it well. My sister has inform'd me
Of Emma's last request; and I to Malcolm,
As we came hither, have repeated it.

PROVOST (*to* ALICE).

Now, dearest child! it is for thee to act.
(*Leads* ALICE *to the bottom of the Stage, where, taking aside the arras which covers the wall, a small door is discovered.*)

CLAUDE (*to* MALCOLM, *seeing him take a book from a bookcase*).

Why dost thou snatch that book so eagerly?

MALCOLM.

It is the book I praised to her so much
A short while since; and see, she has procured it!

CLAUDE.

Ah! thou may'st well be proud. — But how is this?
Thy countenance all o' the sudden changed!
[MALCOLM *lets the book drop from his hand, and* CLAUDE *takes it up eagerly, and opens it, reading.*]

"The gift of one most dear." — Of one most dear!
Thou didst not it give to her?

MALCOLM.

No; nor thou!

MARIAN.

Hush, hush! words of ungentle rivalry
Do ill become this solemn place. Be calm.
See! Alice in the cabinet hath found
That which the vision'd form so earnestly
Directed her to search for.

[ALICE, *returning to the front with a small box in her hands, places it on a table, the rest gathering eagerly round her, and endeavours to open it.*]

ALICE.

I know this box; alas! I know it well,
And many a time have open'd it; but now——

PROVOST.

Thy hands have lost all power, thou tremblest so.
(*Taking it from her and from* GRAHAM, *who attempts to assist her.*)
Nay, friend, thou tremblest also: I will do it.
(*Opens the box, and takes out a written paper.*)

OMNES.

What is it?

PROVOST.

Give me time to look upon it.

GRAHAM.

Some deed or testament. Alas, poor child
Had she prepared for such an early death?

PROVOST.

It is no testament.

MALCOLM (*impatiently*).

What is it then?

CLAUDE.

Nay, father, do not keep us in suspense!

PROVOST.

It is a formal contract of betrothment;
Vows sworn between herself and Basil Gordon.

GRAHAM.

That popish cadet of a hostile house
To me and mine!—Let mine own eyes examine it.
Contracted secretly! to him contracted!
But she is in her grave, and I —— O God!
Grant me with patience to endure thy chastening!
Contracted! married!

PROVOST.

Not married; no, — a mutual solemn promise,
Made to each other in the sight of Heaven.
Thus run the words: —
(*Reads.*) "I, Basil Gordon, will no woman wed
But Emma Graham." — Then follows her engagement: —
"I, Emma Graham, will wed no other man

Than Basil Gordon : yet will never marry
But with consent of my much honour'd father,
When he, less prejudiced, shall know and own
The worth of him I love."
(*Spreading out the paper.*)
This is her writing, as you plainly see ;
And this is Gordon's, for I know it well.

GRAHAM (*beating his breast*).
This blow ! this blow ! a Gordon and a papist !

PROVOST.
True, he is both : the last, I must confess,
No trivial fault. Howbeit he is, in truth,
A brave and noble gentleman.

ALICE.
Indeed he is, dear Sir. Your gentle Emma
Could love no other. Valiant in the field,
As frequent foreign records have attested :
In private conduct good and honourable ;
And loving her he loved, as he has done,
With ardent, tender constancy ——

MALCOLM.
Hold ! hold !
He loved her not — by Heaven he loved her not !
When all who ever knew her, drown'd in sorrow,
Follow'd her hearse, he — he alone was absent.
Where was he then, I pray ?

PROVOST.
I 'll tell thee where :

Stretch'd on a sick-bed — smitten by the same
Most pestilent disease that slew his mistress.

MALCOLM.

Ha! is it so! (*Turning to* CLAUDE.) Then we must hold our peace.

CLAUDE.

And with each other be at peace, dear Malcolm:
What is there now of rivalry between us?

MALCOLM.

Speak not so gently to me, noble Claude!
I 've been to thee so wayward and unjust,
Thy kindness wrings the heart which it should soften.
(*After a pause.*) And all our fond delusion ends in this!
We 've tack'd our shallow barks for the same course;
And the fair mimic isle, like Paradise,
Which seem'd to beckon us, was but a bank
Of ocean's fog, now into air dissolved!

ALICE.

No; say not *beckon'd.* She was honourable
As she was fair: no wily woman's art
Did e'er disgrace her worth: — believe me, Malcolm.

MALCOLM.

Yes; I believe thee, and I bless thee too,
Thou best and loveliest friend of one so lovely!

Pardon me, dearest Alice! generous Alice!
Pardon the hasty error of a word
Which had no meaning—no intended meaning
To cast one shade of blame on thy dear friend;
For henceforth by no other appellation
But thy dear friend shall she be named by me.
(*Turning to* GRAHAM.)
And you, dear Sir! look not so sternly sad.
Her love outran her duty one short step,
But would no farther go, though happiness
Was thereby peril'd. Though his house and yours,
His creed and yours, were so at variance, still,
She might expect his noble qualities
Would in the end subdue a father's heart,
Who did so fondly love her.

GRAHAM.

Cease! I am weak, bereft, and desolate,—
A poor old man, my pride of wisdom sear'd
And ground to dust: what power have I to judge?
May God forgive me if I did amiss!

CLAUDE (*to* PROVOST)

Did Gordon see her ere she breathed her last?

PROVOST.

He did. The nurse, who was her close attendant,

Says, that he came by stealth into her chamber,
And with her words and looks of tenderness
Exchanged, though near her last extremity.
And there he caught the fatal malady.

CLAUDE.

A happy end for him, if it should prove so.

Enter a Servant, *who draws the* PROVOST *aside.*

PROVOST (*aside to* Servant).

Thou hast a woeful face! what has befallen?
[Servant *speaks to him in a whisper.*]

MARIAN (*to* ALICE).

Thy father has received some woeful tidings.

ALICE.

I fear he has; he stands in thoughtful silence.
Father, how is't? your thoughts are very sad.

PROVOST.

Ay; were this span of earthly being all,
'T were sad to think how wealth and domination,
Man's valour, landed pride, and woman's beauty,
When over them the blighting wind hath pass'd,
Are turned to vanity, and known no more!
[*The bell of a neighbouring Church tolls five times.*]

MALCOLM.

What bell is that?

CLAUDE.

Some spirit is released from mortal thraldom.

ALICE.

And passing on its way, we humbly hope,
To endless happiness.

PROVOST.

I trust it is, though stern divines may doubt:
'T is Basil Gordon's knell!

[*The bell tolls again at measured intervals, and, after a solemn pause, the Curtain drops.*]

ENTHUSIASM:

A COMEDY.

IN THREE ACTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN.

LORD WORRYMORE.
COLONEL FRANKLAND.
BLOUNT.
SIR JOHN CROFTON.
CLERMONT.
HUGH, *a Boy.*
PATERSON, *Servant of Colonel Frankland.*
MANHAUNSLET, *a German Vagrant.*
Visiters, Servants, &c.

WOMEN.

LADY WORRYMORE.
LADY SHREWDLY.
MISS FRANKLAND.
MRS. BROWN.
BARBARA, *the Attendant of Miss Frankland.*
Visiters, Servants, &c.

ENTHUSIASM.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Saloon, with a Glass Door opening into a Garden in the bottom of the Stage.* —LORD WORRYMORE *and* LADY SHREWDLY *are seen walking towards the House in earnest conversation, and enter by the said Door, speaking as they enter.*

LADY SHREWDLY.

BUT, my dear Lord Worrymore, did you not know all this before you married her? and did you not admire the charming ardour of her character?

LORD WORRYMORE.

Yes, Madam; for things worthy of that ardour did then engage her attention. The first time I beheld her,—I believe I have told you before.

LADY SHREWDLY.

True, my Lord; I have heard you say that the first time you beheld her was in the painting gallery of Mr. Rougeit, where she stood rivetted with admiration before the portrait of your Lordship; and that grace and expression attracted her at that moment, I am not disposed to question.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Yes, my dear friend; and in poetry also, and the graver works of composition, nothing that was excellent escaped her. My speech upon the former Corn Bill delighted her: not an argument or happy expression in the whole that she could not repeat with a spirit and action appropriate. She had a sound taste for eloquence; nobody admired it like her.

LADY SHREWDLY.

How should they? She must have had a capacity made on purpose to admire that speech; and a very rare one too, I assure you.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Not a word or observation fell from my lips, but she understood the sense and spirit of it so quickly.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Leaving any other listener far behind, I dare say.

LORD WORRYMORE.

And now, every learned oddity, every foolish coxcomb who has gathered up in the world but a shred of reputation for any thing, engrosses exclusively, for the time, her thoughts and admiration; and what *I* do, what *I* speak, what *I* write, is no more attended to, than if I had changed into a common-place person on her hands.

LADY SHREWDLY.

And that is what *change* could never make your Lordship.

LORD WORRYMORE (*bowing with affected modesty*).

To be sure, I then thought enthusiasm a very charming quality.

LADY SHREWDLY.

But not very constant to its object, my Lord; you surely could not think that. You have had your turn, and should now with a better grace give up some portion of her admiration to the other sages, orators, and poets with which this happy metropolis abounds.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Sages, orators, and poets, Lady Shrewdly! She has been tearing the clothes off her back in squeezing through the crowd of a city conventicle, to hear the long-winded sermons of a pres-

byterian parson. She has knocked up two sets of horses driving over the town after Italian improvisatori and German philosophers. Her boudoir is studded round with skulls like a charnel-house; and bold dirty creatures from St. Giles come into her very dressing-room, with their ricketty brats in their arms, to put their large mis-shapen heads under her inspection, as the future mighty geniuses of the land. Speaking birds, giraffes, and lectures upon Shakspeare have followed one another in succession, to say nothing of her present little imp of a juggler; and all in their turn are the sole occupiers of her ardent admiration. What a change! what a change for me! With my poor deceased Magdalene how different it was!

LADY SHREWDLY.

To be sure, in the first Lady Worrymore's time it was very different; but you compared her, not long ago, to a dull foggy day in Novemvember, and the present to a bright morning in spring.

LORD WORRYMORE.

So I did, so I did, my good cousin; but there are bright mornings in spring, when the wind blows from every point of the compass in the course of ten minutes, bringing sand, dust, and straws from every lane and corner, to blind one's

poor eyes and annoy one. I am a miserable man! What can be done to reclaim her?

LADY SHREWDLY.

Very little, I believe.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Oh, oh!

LADY SHREWDLY.

But do not despair; she may get tired of this hurricane of enthusiasm, after two or three tricks have been played upon her credulity.

LORD WORRYMORE.

You think so.

LADY SHREWDLY.

And it would not, perhaps, be amiss for you to lie by for a time, and make no more attempts to bring back her attention to your own merits. Or if you cannot forbear doing so, do it covertly.

LORD WORRYMORE.

How covertly?

LADY SHREWDLY.

Write another eloquent speech upon some approaching Parliamentary question, and let it be submitted to her criticism, as the composition of some young Irish orator of amazing genius, who has hitherto, from modesty, given silent votes in the house, and you will see how prodigiously she will be struck with the depth, the

force, the brilliancy of the dear, delightful oration.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Now, my dear good cousin, are you serious?

LADY SHREWDLY.

Serious or not, I can think of nothing so likely to serve your ends, under the present untoward circumstances. But somebody is coming.

Enter BLOUNT.

O, 'tis a gay young sailor returned from a three years' station in the Mediterranean.—You 're welcome, dear Frank! let me see you as often as you can while you remain in town; it always gives me pleasure. Permit me to present Mr. Francis Blount to your Lordship: the son of an old friend and schoolfellow of mine.

LORD WORRYMORE.

I am glad to have the honour of meeting any friend of yours; and hope he has returned safe and sound from the sabres of the Greek pirates.

BLOUNT.

I boast of no honourable scars as yet, my Lord.

LORD WORRYMORE.

All in good time, young gentleman.

BLOUNT.

Has your Ladyship any commands for Herefordshire?

LADY SHREWDLY.

Are you going so soon?

BLOUNT.

In a few days, I believe.

LADY SHREWDLY.

What takes you there so soon? Your native place is changed since you left it; scarcely a family remains of the old set.

BLOUNT.

Nay; my good aunt Hammond still holds her state in the old mansion-house, and Squire Gozling, with his pretty daughter, I suppose, is there still.

(LADY SHREWDLY *frowns to him significantly.*)

LORD WORRYMORE (*smiling*).

You will find your bird flown from that nest, I believe.

BLOUNT.

Is little Kate married?

LADY SHREWDLY.

No, she is not; but Arabella——

BLOUNT.

O, as to her, she is welcome to marry for me,

as soon as she can find any wiseacre to have her.

LADY SHREWDLY (*who has been frowning and making faces to him behind* LORD WORRYMORE'*s back, but in vain.*)

Out upon thee, Frank, for a very spiteful creature! Thou hast paid thy devoirs to her, I dare say, and she has scorned such a stripling as thou wert at that time.

BLOUNT.

My devoirs, to a dull formal prude, who spoke two words in half a day, and those uttered as slowly and deliberately as if she were reading them from the spelling-book!

LADY SHREWDLY.

We must be at cross purposes now, surely; we are not speaking of the same lady.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Don't mind it, Lady Shrewdly; it is clearly a mistake, and is of no consequence whatever. — I wish you good morning. Good morning, Sir. [*Exit.*

LADY SHREWDLY.

O Francis Blount! what hast thou done?

BLOUNT.

Nothing very bad, I hope.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Didst thou not see me making faces to thee to stop thy foolish tongue?

BLOUNT.

And how was I to know what all those grimaces were meant for, when ladies, now-a-days, twist their features all manner of ways, as I am told, for the sake of expression?

LADY SHREWDLY.

Arabella Gozling, whom thou hast made so free with, is now the wife of Lord Worrymore, and a peeress of England.

BLOUNT (*holding up his hands, and laughing heartily*).

Every man to his own fancy! This good peer must have admired her as the most prudent piece of still life that ever wore mantua and petticoat.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Quite wrong again, friend; he married her as a high-toned, ardent enthusiast.

BLOUNT.

When my grandmother links herself to a third husband, I may believe that he marries her as a round, dimpled Hebe of fifteen. An imaginative ardent enthusiast! How could the creature so transmogrify herself? ay, or think of such a change?

LADY SHREWDLY.

That, it must be owned, is difficult to explain.

BLOUNT.

O, now I have it! She became tired of sitting in the corner unnoticed, and has heard no doubt of some lady captivating every heart by her lively and generous enthusiasm; so she has rushed from her tackle of footstools and decorum, like a brig cut from the stocks, and set herself afloat on the ocean of fashion. By my faith, and she has made a good cruise of it too!

LADY SHREWDLY.

Perhaps your conjecture is not far from the truth.

BLOUNT.

How came this goose of a lord to be taken in by it?

LADY SHREWDLY.

By that which has taken in many, both lords and commoners, ere now;—his own obtrusive eagerness for praise, which had tired out everybody.

BLOUNT.

And received this new stream of flattery like rain upon the parched sands of Araby.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Even so: to say nothing of a wife lately dead, who would never say one civil thing of all the

clever writings that his persevering talents produced.

BLOUNT.

He must be a happy dog now, I think: up in the seventh heaven.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Nay, nay! fallen from that exaltation deplorably. And if thou hast a mind, I'll engage thee in a plot to restore the poor man to some part of his lost felicity, and mortify his affected spouse at the same time. Canst thou put a Brutus-wig on thy head, and become a great orator for a season?

BLOUNT.

Can I not? I have danced upon deck, ere now, with a turban on my head, as a sultana of the royal harem.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Come, then; thou art just the man I want. Let us go to my closet, where we may concert the whole matter without interruption.

(*As they are going off, he stops and laughs heartily.*)

What tickles your fancy so? Don't stop here.

BLOUNT.

Methinks she is now before my eyes, this same ardent peeress who makes such commotion

[illegible] you, seated on a high-legged drawing-room chair, the back of which she would not have touched on any account, for the ruffling of her pinched frill and collar. And when you showed her a butterfly or flower from the garden, and said, "Is not that beautiful?" she would draw herself up most precisely, and say, "I believe it is considered so." (*Laughing again.*)

LADY SHREWDLY.

Move on, foolish boy.

BLOUNT.

She would not give her opinion, but with prudent reserve, on the merits of a beetle or a cock-chafer.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Go, go!

BLOUNT.

And that too was affectation; for she was a careless hoyden first of all, and took to sense and preciseness afterwards.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Move on, I say. We are losing time here, and may be prevented.

[*Exeunt, she pushing him gently off the Stage, and he still continuing to laugh.*

SCENE II.

COLONEL FRANKLAND'S *House.*

Enter CLERMONT, *looking round as if disappointed.*

CLERMONT.

No, she is not here. She is with her uncle, I suppose, reading to him some dull book or other — the Sportsman's Guide, or the plans of Marlborough's battles, as cheerfully and contentedly as if it were the most interesting story or poem that ever was written.

Enter MISS FRANKLAND.

I have interrupted some pleasant reading, I'm afraid.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Not at all: we have got to the end of our battles, and he is now teaching me to play chess.

CLERMONT.

I have brought you a book that will delight you.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Are you sure of that? I am no great admirer

of poetry, — of what is called sentimental poetry, at least.

CLERMONT.

Did you not like my friend's sonnets, which I brought you yesterday?

MISS FRANKLAND.

O dear, no! I did not understand them.

CLERMONT.

Surely some of the thoughts they express are beautiful and tender.

MISS FRANKLAND.

I dare say they are; but why should beautiful thoughts be cramped up in such patterned shapes of versification, — all rule and difficulty? I have neither ear for the measure, nor quickness of comprehension for the meaning.

CLERMONT.

Don't say so, Fanny. Neither ear nor comprehension are in fault with you. — I should rather fear — I should rather say — No matter!

MISS FRANKLAND.

What would you say?

CLERMONT.

Nothing.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Nay, a blush passes over your face. Were any of those sonnets written by yourself?

CLERMONT.

Not one of them, I assure you. I wish some of them were.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Now I'm sure you have been writing something of the kind. I see it in your face.

CLERMONT.

Well, then, since you guess so quickly, I confess that I have; but it shall never be put into your hands.

MISS FRANKLAND.

O, do let me see it, Clermont! Give it me now.

CLERMONT.

I have it not about me.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Has any body seen it?

CLERMONT.

Only one imprudent friend, who has mentioned it to Lady Worrymore.

MISS FRANKLAND.

I'm sorry for it.

CLERMONT.

Is it a great misfortune, that you should look so grave upon it? May I request to know——

MISS FRANKLAND.

Say nothing more about it: there is company at hand.

Enter SIR JOHN CROFTON.

SIR JOHN.

But not disagreeable company, I hope. If it be so, tell me frankly (*looking significantly at them both*), and I will retire.

CLERMONT.

You are too well aware, Sir John, that your company is always agreeable.

MISS FRANKLAND.

In this house I am sure it is.—And you arrive at a lucky moment, too; for I hear Lady Worrymore coming.

Enter LADY WORRYMORE.

Good morning, Lady Worrymore: how kind you are to call upon me, occupied as you are with so many objects of interest.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Don't speak to me, dear creature.

SIR JOHN (*to* LADY WORRYMORE).

May I presume to say how——

LADY WORRYMORE.

Don't speak to me, Sir John; where is pen

and paper? (*Running to a writing-table.*) I must write immediately; I have been prevented by a hurry of engagements all the morning. (*Sits down and writes very fast, speaking to them at the same time.*) The sweet, heavenly creature! it is two long hours since I heard of him.

SIR JOHN (*aside to* MISS FRANKLAND).

The juggling boy, I suppose, who is sick with eating plum cake.

LADY WORRYMORE (*still writing as before*).

The dear little darling! and he leans his aching head on the pillow — with such languid softness — the 'kerchief twisted round it, too — no model for an artist was ever so beautiful!

SIR JOHN.

Your Ladyship must have him painted so; and take care to keep him sick till the picture is finished.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Unfeeling savage!

SIR JOHN.

A little more cake will do the business.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Don't speak to me. (*Motioning him off with her hand, and muttering aloud as she looks over the note she has finished.*) Let me know in-

stantly — the health of the suffering angel— every minute particular since I saw him last. (*Folds it up.*) Who waits there?

Enter a Servant.

Give this to my servant; it is for the mistress of the house where Master Munhaunslet lodges. He must go with it immediately, and wait for an answer.

SERVANT (*taking the note*).

And bring the answer here, my Lady?

LADY WORRYMORE.

Yes.—No; to the exhibition of antiques in Piccadilly. No, no! to the lecture-room of Mr. Clutterbuck; there will be friends there almost as anxious as myself to hear how the little angel does.

SIR JOHN.

Mr. Clutterbuck must be a superlative critic, indeed, to attract your Ladyship at so anxious a moment as the present.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Have you not heard him? You are incapable of appreciating two lines of our immortal bard, if you have not attended Mr. Clutterbuck.

SIR JOHN.

I am in very truth, then, an ignorant fellow; and so are you, Clermont, I believe.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Clermont! Have I the pleasure of beholding the writer of that beautiful sonnet, which has been mentioned to me with so much praise?

SIR JOHN (*presenting* CLERMONT).

A poet who will think himself honoured indeed by the notice of such a critic as Lady Worrymore.

LADY WORRYMORE.

O no, Sir John! an ardent admirer of the Muses, but no critic.—To what a charming department of poetry, Mr. Clermont, you have devoted your pen! The sonnet! — the refined, the tender, the divine sonnet! O how it purifies and separates the mind from all commonness and meanness of Nature! Methinks the happy spirits in Elysium must converse with one another in sonnets.

SIR JOHN.

What a happy time they must have of it, if they do!

CLERMONT.

It is a new and bright fancy of your Ladyship's, and never entered my mundane imagination before.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Has it not? O, I have worshipped Petrarch,

dreamt of him, repeated in my sleep all his beautiful conceptions, till I have started from my couch in a paroxysm of delight!

SIR JOHN.

Ah, Lady Worrymore! you should have lived some centuries earlier, and been the Laura of that impassioned poet yourself.

MISS FRANKLAND (*aside to* SIR JOHN).

I wish she had, with all my heart.

LADY WORRYMORE.

But I have not yet seen your sweet composition, Mr. Clermont; pray, pray, give it to me! this very moment — O this very moment! I die to peruse it! I am miserable till I see it! it will haunt my thoughts the whole day!

MISS FRANKLAND.

Dear Lady Worrymore, will you shame the divine Mr. Clutterbuck's lecture so much as to think of it then?

LADY WORRYMORE.

Ah! my dear Miss Frankland, you are too severe: Shakspeare should indeed be paramount to every thing. Dear Shakspeare! dear Petrarch! I doat on them both. (*Looking at her watch.*) Bless me! I am behind my time. Adieu, adieu! (*To* CLERMONT.) And you will send me your sonnet? you will do me that

honour? you will confer upon me that infinite obligation? Adieu, adieu!

[*Exit, hurrying off, and passing* BLOUNT *without notice, who has entered towards the end of her rhapsody, and drawn himself up by the wall to let her pass.*]

BLOUNT (*coming forward*).

It is best to reef one's sails when a hurricane is abroad.

SIR JOHN.

Why did you not speak to her, Blount? She is your old acquaintance.

BLOUNT.

I have known a lady called Miss Gozling, in whose presence I have stood undismayed; but I must take to my studies, I trow, before I accost my Lady Worrymore.

SIR JOHN.

That is prudent, Frank; you are rather far behind in book-learning.

MISS FRANKLAND (*glancing at* CLERMONT).

And have not yet penned a sonnet, I believe.

BLOUNT.

Faith, I don't know a sonnet from a roundelay; but I shall qualify myself to compose both very expertly, before I become a candidate for her favour.

SIR JOHN.

You look grave, Clermont.

CLERMONT.

I confess you seem to me too severe on this lady. The ardour of her character very naturally betrays her into exaggerated expressions; but surely (*glancing at* MISS FRANKLAND) it is preferable to the cold decorum of insensibility or indifference.

BLOUNT.

Of course, Clermont, this fine sonnet of yours is to be put into her fair hands.

CLERMONT.

I shall put it under cover, and leave it at her door in the evening.

BLOUNT.

It is out of your way; I am sailing on the right tack for that point; give the packet to my charge, and I will leave it at Worrymore House as I pass.

Enter a Servant.

SERVANT.

Colonel Frankland begs to have the honour of seeing the gentlemen in his dressing-room.

SIR JOHN.

Does the gout still confine him up stairs?

MISS FRANKLAND.

Indeed it does; and it will be charitable in you all to sit with him as long as you can.

[*Exeunt* SIR JOHN, CLERMONT, *and* BLOUNT.

MISS FRANKLAND (*alone, after a thoughtful pause*).

That he should be so taken in! — But is he so? — In some degree, I fear. — Perhaps it is only to vex me. (*Walking up and down with a hurried step.*) No, no! he is taken in. — Is he a vain, conceited man, and have I never discovered it till now? — It cannot be: he has read me many compositions of his friends; one of his own, scarcely ever. — Oh, oh! I wish there was not such a thing as a sonnet in the world!

Enter BARBARA.

BARBARA.

The jelly is ready, Madam, that you mean to carry to the sick boy; and the carriage is waiting.

MISS FRANKLAND.

I thank you, Barbara, for reminding me. Fetch my scarf, and we 'll go.

BARBARA.

You 're very right, Ma'am, to look after him, for he 's a poor peeping chit; and Lady Worrymore, his landlady tells me, will be the death of him. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A poor-looking Chamber, with a Sofa near the front of the Stage.

Enter MRS. BROWN, *with* HUGHO, *whom she leads to the sofa, then lays him along, and spreads a shawl over him, and then takes a note from her pocket.*

HUGHO.

Tank you, good moder. What is dat?

MRS. BROWN.

Something to divert you, my dear; — a note from Lady Worrymore.

HUGHO.

Someting to torment me.

MRS. BROWN.

She is too good to you, indeed.

HUGHO.

Not good — not good. I was well; she stuff me wid cream and comfeit, and make me sick, and now she leave me no rest in my sickness.

MRS. BROWN.

Don't be disturbed, dear child; she won't

come near you to-day. I bade the servant tell his lady not to come.

HUGHO.

You speak message to him?

MRS. BROWN.

To be sure I did. Lord help me! where was I to find time, and words, and spelling to write her an answer to all the particlers she axed to know about? I just bade him say to her that you were no better, and must not be disturbed.

HUGHO.

She will disturb me de more, and call it comfort. O, dat ladies would leave off comforting!

MRS. BROWN.

But there is one lady who is good and quiet, I'm sure, and does not torment you.

HUGHO.

Ay, der is one, and she be very good.

MRS. BROWN.

She sends you what is fit for you to take, and writes no notes at all.

HUGHO.

I will dance, and play cup and ball to her, when I be well, and tell fader, when he returns, to take no money for it.

MRS. BROWN.

And will fader do so, think you? It would

be no misfortune to thee, poor thing, if he should never return.

Enter MISS FRANKLAND, *and steals on tiptoe to the back of the sofa.*

MISS FRANKLAND (*speaking softly to* MRS. BROWN).

He is resting, I see. I have brought the jelly, and will go away. (*Retiring*).

HUGHO.

Who dere?

MRS. BROWN.

Miss Frankling: but she is going away.

HUGHO.

Not go, not go; good Miss Frankling!

[MRS. BROWN *sets a chair for* MISS FRANKLAND *by the sofa, and* HUGHO *takes her hand and kisses it.*]

MISS FRANKLAND.

Don't speak, Hugho: I go away if you do.

[*He raises his head, and nods to her without speaking.*]

MRS. BROWN.

You start, Madam!

MISS FRANKLAND.

That handkerchief round his head gives him a likeness I never observed before.

MRS. BROWN.

Them wandering foreigners, Madam, have no nightcaps: they are no better than savages in that and many other respects. (*Pointing to the handkerchief on his head.*) It is, to be sure, an unchristian-looking rag: I could scarcely bear to let him say his prayers in it.

[*A loud rap is heard at the street-door.*]

HUGHO (*starting up in a fright*).

It is Lady Worrymore.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Be quiet, poor child! I'll soon carry her away with me: she sha'n't tease you long.

Enter LADY WORRYMORE.

LADY WORRYMORE (*running up to the sofa, clasping her hands affectedly, and hanging over him*).

Lovely darling! O how I grieve to find you still so ill! What can I do to make you well?

HUGHO.

Stay away: dat shall best make me well.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Stay away! how can I do so, my angel, when I am so interested—so grieved? Nobody knows how much I grieve for him.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Nay, a good many do, I should think; for you have been grieving all over the town.

LADY WORRYMORE.

You little know: how could words express what I have felt for him? Look at the lovely creature! There is soul and beauty in every line of his countenance. Nay, don't frown at me, Hugho: if you are suffering I'll kiss away the pain. (*Stoops and kisses him vehemently, while he struggles and pushes her off.*)

MISS FRANKLAND.

Do, Lady Worrymore, be quiet. You'll put the poor child into a fever.

LADY WORRYMORE (*persevering*).

No, no! I will make him well: he must be well; for I have told Lady Tweedler, and Lady Cockup, and Miss Larden how beautiful he looks in his handkerchief turban; and they are all coming to see him.

HUGHO.

O dear, dear! to be so tormented! I wish dat I was dead. (*Bursting into tears.*)

MRS. BROWN.

Indeed, indeed, my Lady, your kindness is obstrepulous: the poor child will die of it.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Let me entreat you, Lady Worrymore, to leave him in peace; and forbid those ladies to come here. He will have a night-cap on his head presently, and then it will neither be worth your while nor theirs to come near him.

LADY WORRYMORE.

What a heartless girl you are, Miss Frankland! how unfeeling! A night-cap on that pretty classical head! What would Mr. Palette say? what would our great sculptors say of such a proposal? They would call you a barbarian.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Let them call me what they please; we have no right to torment the poor boy with our admiration. Do leave him in peace. See how he is weeping with vexation, and cannot get to sleep.

MRS. BROWN.

Which is quite necessary, my Lady, as your Ladyship knows very well. Neither beast nor body can do without sleep, as my good old mistress used to say, and she was a very sensible woman.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Well, then, be it so; since even such a creature as this is subject to the necessities of na-

ture. But let me wipe his tears before I leave him, and cover him up close for repose. (*Wiping his eyes with her pocket handkerchief, and going to arrange the shawl.*) Bless me! what a covering is this for my darling! (*Pulling it off, and taking a fine Indian shawl from her shoulders, which she spreads over him.*) This is more worthy to enfold such a being; this will keep him better from the cold. — Sweet rest to you, my pretty Hugh! I must tear myself away.

[*Curtsies slightly to* MISS FRANKLAND, *and hurries off.*

MRS. BROWN.

She has left him a good shawl, howsomever; it will put a mint of money into his purse, when he has wit enough to dispose of it.

MISS FRANKLAND.

You must not reckon upon that too securely.

Re-enter LADY WORRYMORE, *and beckons* MRS. BROWN, *who goes to her apart.*

LADY WORRYMORE (*aside to* MRS. BROWN).

You need take no trouble about the shawl, you know; for my servant will call for it to-morrow. [*Exit hastily.*

MISS FRANKLAND.

Call for it to-morrow! The shawl, I suppose?

MRS. BROWN.

Yes; deuce take her generosity! kisses and sweet words are cheaper than shawls.

MISS FRANKLAND.

I guessed as much; the mint of money won't come from that quarter.—Let us move a little to this corner, if you please. (*Leads* MRS. BROWN *away from the sofa, more to the front.*) What do you know of the man who brought him to England—this Manhaunslet? Do you think he is really his father?

MRS. BROWN.

He says he is.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Does he behave to him as if he were?

MRS. BROWN.

He behaves to him as well as some fathers do to their children; and that is indifferent enough.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Poor boy! indifferent enough, I fear.

MRS. BROWN.

He had a monkey, when he first came, that danced on its hind legs, and played quarter-staff and them tricks; and I never knew which of them he liked best, Hugho or the ape: he gave them the same food, the same kind of fondling, and the same education.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Did you not tell me, a few minutes since, that the boy said his prayers?

MRS. BROWN.

True, Madam; but he did so, because I told him he ought to do it, for all good boys did so.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Did he pray in the German tongue?

MRS. BROWN.

No; God forbid, Madam, that he should speak to his Creator in such a jargon as that!

MISS FRANKLAND.

You taught him, then, what to say?

MRS. BROWN.

To be sure I did, Madam; for, as I said before, the ape and him had both the same learning from that heathenish vagrant, Manhaunslet.

MISS FRANKLAND.

And what has become of the ape?

MRS. BROWN.

As soon as little Hugho was so admired by the gentry, as to be sent for to great folk's houses, to show off his balls and his dancing, and all them there pretty motions of his, he understood, somehow or other, that the monkey was not reckoned genteel, and so he sent him on his

travels with another outlandish vagrant, to go to country fairs and the like.

MISS FRANKLAND.

But what has become of Manhaunslet?

MRS. BROWN.

I don't know, Madam.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Did he ever mention his wife to you, or who was Hugho's mother?

MRS. BROWN.

No, Madam.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Did Hugho ever mention his mother?

MRS. BROWN.

No, Madam.

MISS FRANKLAND.

I thank you, Mrs. Brown. Take good care of the child. I'll see you soon again. (*Going to the sofa.*) He is in a sound sleep now. How strong that likeness is! even sleep seems to add to it.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The House of* COLONEL FRANKLAND. *He enters, with a letter in his hand, leaning on* PATERSON. *Sits down in an easy chair, and sets about arranging books and papers on a table at the bottom of the Stage.*

COLONEL FRANKLAND (*after looking at the letter*).

Let me again consider the request of this gay Baronet. (*Muttering as he reads.*) Disinterested attachment—only requests to be allowed to endeavour to gain her good opinion.—— Yes, yes! the plea and pretensions of them all. The days of our life wear on, and every pleasant solace, after it has lulled and cheered us for a season, drops away.—I would rather have parted with her to William Clermont; but what course of events is ever fulfilled according to the foresight of our imagination? (*Speaking in a louder voice, vehemently.*) None! no, none!

PATERSON (*advancing from the bottom*).

What is your pleasure, Sir?

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

A thing which I never get, Paterson.

PATERSON.

I'm sure I do all I can to content your honour.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

So thou dost, my old friend; but thou canst not make Fortune do the same thing. Thou art an old soldier, Paterson, as well as myself: tell me, now, if thou wert ever at siege, battle, or even skirmish, in thy life, wherein every circumstance fell out as the general or commander had reckoned upon?

PATERSON.

No, surely, your honour. But what is the head of a general good for, if it can do nothing but plan, and cannot turn every unforeseen accident that casts up, to the furtherance of his purpose some way or other?

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Very true, my friend; and thou art teaching me a lesson without being aware of it.

PATERSON.

I were a bold man, indeed, to pretend to do that to your honour knowingly.

COLONEL FRANKLAND (*sighing deeply*).

I wish I had had some such teaching ten years ago. But no; I suppose it would have done me no good then.

PATERSON.

Ay; that was about the time when our young lady——

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Don't speak of that; I can't bear it.

PATERSON.

I crave your honour's pardon; I might have known as much. But when you talk cheerily to me, I always, somehow or other, forget myself.

Enter SIR JOHN CROFTON, *and* PATERSON *retires.*

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Your servant, Sir John. You are, in the true etiquette of a lover, I see, somewhat before your time.

SIR JOHN.

Call it not so, Colonel. What has made it etiquette to all, but the natural haste and ardour of real lovers? and of my pretensions to be considered as one of the last class, I hope in good time to convince you.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Convince the lady, Sir John; and if the conviction should please her, I must be content. I will not thwart her inclinations.

SIR JOHN.

I thank you, my dear Sir, for this ready and hearty acquiescence in the first wish of my heart.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Nay; you rate my acquiescence somewhat beyond its real worth: it is neither ready nor hearty.

SIR JOHN.

I am very sorry if my proposals to your niece do in any respect displease you, Colonel Frankland.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

They do me honour, Sir John, and displease me as little as any offer of the kind could have done, with one exception; for I will deal honestly with you.

SIR JOHN.

I respect your sincerity, though it gives me the pain of knowing there is one whom you would have preferred to me.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

But it is a preference arising more from the partiality of my own feelings, than from any superior pretensions in the man.

SIR JOHN.

I thank you for this candour, and will not conceal from you that I considered Clermont as

an acceptable visiter in the family, which has made me hitherto conceal the nature of my feelings for your charming niece; but, seeing his mind become so suddenly engrossed with the blandishments of Lady Worrymore, I have thought myself at liberty to declare my secret sentiments.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Yes; I have had some intimation of it. (*Starting from his chair, and walking lamely but rapidly across the floor.*) Silly noodle! — foolish simpleton! — bewildered ninnyhammer! He had brains in his head once.

SIR JOHN.

They are gone a wool-gathering for the present, at least.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

And will return with a knotty handful of it for their pains. — O, the senseless gudgeon!

SIR JOHN.

Senseless enough, it must be owned. I should have thought ——

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Say no more upon this foolish subject. — There is a fair field before you, Sir John: win the lass, if you can, and then I will do my part, and strive to give up my comfort as resignedly as may be.

Enter MISS FRANKLAND.

SIR JOHN (*going eagerly up to her*).

How fortunate I am to see you thus, on the very first conversation I have presumed to hold with your uncle on the subject nearest to my heart! (*Taking her hand, which she endeavours to pull away.*)

MISS FRANKLAND.

Your fortune, however, will be of short continuance, if my presence is concerned with it; for I only wished to see my uncle for one moment, as there is a person waiting for me, below stairs, on particular business.

SIR JOHN.

Some milliner or shop-woman, I suppose, who can as well return to-morrow.

MISS FRANKLAND.

And if it were so, I have no right to waste her time, whatever I may do with my own. — Good morning.

SIR JOHN (*still endeavouring to detain her*).

Call it not *waste*. Nobody rates time so high as those who will go.

MISS FRANKLAND.

And nobody rates it so low as those who will not.

SIR JOHN.

Let us compromise the difference, then. Stay here but one quarter of an hour, and I 'll give you my word of honour to go at the end of it.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Even that promise cannot detain me.

[*Exit hastily.*

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

What did the saucy girl say to you just now, when she frowned so?

SIR JOHN (*conceitedly*).

O! young ladies' frowns are like dreams, and must be interpreted by contraries.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Not those of Fanny Frankland, however; she frowns not on man, woman, or child, without being really displeased. This looks unpromising, Sir John.

SIR JOHN.

Not a whit — not a whit, my dear Colonel. I have known a man refused by a fair mistress three times in the course of one little month, and married to her at the end of it.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Then let me freely tell you, Sir, that the wooer and the wooed were, in that case, worthy of one another.

SIR JOHN.

Your irony, my good Sir, is rather too severe. I don't pretend to be romantic; but in the sincerity and disinterestedness of my attachment to Miss Frankland, I hope you will do me the honour and the justice to place confidence. — I now take my leave, and I hope, with your permission, to repeat my visits.

[*Exit*, COLONEL FRANKLAND *bowing coldly to him.*

COLONEL FRANKLAND (*alone*).

This won't do; no, it won't do. — O that the silly fellow should have allowed himself to be bewildered with the rhapsodies of such a fool as Lady Worrymore! Surely, writing verses must have some power of intoxication in it, and can turn a sensible man into a fool by some process of mental alchemy. — Thank God, I never had any personal experience of the matter! — I once tried to turn a few common expressions of civility into two couplets of metre, to please a dainty lady withal, but it would not do: so I e'en gave it up, and kept the little portion of mother-wit that Nature had bestowed upon me uninjured.

Re-enter MISS FRANKLAND.

Art thou here again?

MISS FRANKLAND.

I waited till I heard him go away.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

And hast returned, with the curiosity of a very woman, to learn what he has been saying to me.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Nay, the vanity of a very woman has whispered in my ear, and informed me of all that already.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

And was it welcome information?

MISS FRANKLAND.

Not very.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

He has rank, — a fair character, as young men go in the world, and a moderately good fortune.

MISS FRANKLAND.

He has those recommendations.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

And is, moreover, free from the follies of poetry. — What sayest thou, then, to such a suitor?

MISS FRANKLAND.

As long as you are not tired of me, dear uncle, I will not give up your society for that of any other man. And I feel, my dear Sir, — (*taking his hand tenderly,*) — I feel it sensibly and gratefully, that you are not tired of me yet.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Foolish child! tired of the only comfort I have on earth!

MISS FRANKLAND.

Let us say no more, then, on this subject. — I came to speak to you of something else.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

And I will listen to thee most willingly.

MISS FRANKLAND (*with emotion*).

I thank you — I am going — I would not give you pain — I should not have ventured ——

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

What is the meaning of all these *I*'s, and *would not*'s, and *should not*'s, and pauses, and pantings?

MISS FRANKLAND.

Bear with me a moment. I shall be able to speak coherently by and by.

[*A pause, during which he looks earnestly in her face.*]

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Well, dear Fanny, what is it?

MISS FRANKLAND (*in a hurried manner*).

Are you sure that your daughter left no child behind her?

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Quite sure. — I am confident of it. — I have

good reason to believe she did not. — Do not put racking thoughts into my head. What has tempted thee to tear open an ill-closed wound?

MISS FRANKLAND.

Pardon the pain I give. A strong sense of duty compels me. — You are confident, you say, and on good reasons, that she left no child behind her.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Would not that Italian adventurer have informed a wealthy father-in-law that a child was born, and had survived its mother? Would such a plea for worldly purposes have been neglected? No, there could be no child; and, thank Heaven, there was none! — What can have put such fancies into thy head?

MISS FRANKLAND.

I have seen a child to-day who strongly resembles my cousin.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Thou art too young to have any distinct recollection of her face.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Nay, but I have: it was so pleasant a face, and she was so good to me.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

It was a pleasant face. If I could remember

her as she once was, and forget what she afterwards became, it would be a recollection worth all my wealth to purchase.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Should you like to see this child?

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

No, no, no! I could not bear it.

MISS FRANKLAND.

He shall not, then, be brought to you; but I will often go and look at him myself. You will not be offended with that?

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Thou wilt go often to look at him! Is the likeness then so strong?

MISS FRANKLAND.

So strong, that in looking on him you would feel that Louisa, or such a woman as Louisa, must have been his mother.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Such a woman, an thou wilt. — What kind of forehead has this child?

MISS FRANKLAND.

Somewhat broad and low.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

And the nose?

MISS FRANKLAND.

Rather short than long; and the nostrils on either side are curved so prettily, that they look like two little delicate shells.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Is it possible! This was the peculiarity in her face.

MISS FRANKLAND.

You droop your head, dear uncle; — you tremble. Let me bring this child to you.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Not now, — not now.

MISS FRANKLAND.

But you will, some other time.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Let me have a little respite. — To look on aught like her — like what she was — like the creature that played round my chair — that followed me — that —— Out upon thee, Fanny Frankland! thou hast stirred up vain yearnings within me, and when I see him he will not be like her after all.

MISS FRANKLAND.

And if he should not be so like as you expected, will you not befriend a poor helpless child, for even a slight resemblance?

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

I 'll do what thou desirest, be it ever so slight.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Thanks, dear uncle! Retire and compose yourself awhile. Let me lead you to your own room. [*Exeunt, he leaning on her arm.*

SCENE II.

LADY SHREWDLY'*s Garden: the House seen in the side Scene.*

Enter from a walk, at the bottom of the Stage, LADY WORRYMORE *and* CLERMONT, *speaking as they enter.*

LADY WORRYMORE.

And then, again, can any thing be more beautiful than when, looking up to Juliet's window, he exclaims, —

> "Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
> Who is already sick and pale with grief,
> That thou, her maid, art far more fair than she."

O how fine! — You are silent: don't you think so?

CLERMONT.

There are many passages in the play which I admire more.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Nay, surely you admire it: positively you must. I doat upon it; and Mr. Clutterbuck says, no lover could have said any thing of his mistress so exquisitely impassioned—so finely imagined.

CLERMONT.

I believe, indeed, no lover would have said any thing like it.

LADY WORRYMORE.

And again, which is, perhaps, more exquisite still, —

"Two of the fairest stars in all the heavens,
Having some business, do entreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
Which, if her eyes were there, they in her head,
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars
As daylight doth a lamp: her eyes in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright,
That birds would sing, and think it were not night!"

Is not that impassioned? Is not that sublime?

CLERMONT.

I dare not pretend to judge of what is so honoured by your ladyship's approbation. But you have stopped short at the only lines in the whole speech that appear to me, although with some degree of conceit, to express the natural feelings of a lover.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Indeed! Repeat them, I pray.

CLERMONT.

" O that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek!"

LADY WORRYMORE (*in a drawling voice*).

Yes, to be sure, a common lover might have said something like that. — Mr. Clutterbuck took no notice of those lines. — But, positively, you must attend his lectures: you must, indeed. You cannot adore our immortal bard as you ought, without hearing Clutterbuck. — (*Looking at her watch.*) Bless me! how time flies! — I should, ere this, have been contemplating the divine lineaments of that Madonna. — You 'll go with me, I hope?

CLERMONT.

I am sorry it is not in my power; but allow me the honour of attending you to your carriage.

[*Exeunt, disappearing among the bushes, as* LADY SHREWDLY *and* MISS FRANKLAND *enter from the house.*]

MISS FRANKLAND.

I see a lady and gentleman yonder; who are they?

LADY SHREWDLY.

Only Lady Worrymore and Clermont. — They left me some time ago; and her carriage waits for her at the wicket: but, I suppose they

have found it agreeable to take a sentimental saunter in the shrubbery.

MISS FRANKLAND.

They have become mighty intimate. Who could have thought it?

LADY SHREWDLY.

Vanity, as well as a city shower, occasions many strange acquaintances.

MISS FRANKLAND.

But of a kind less transient. They do not part at the mouth of a shed or gateway, and meet again no more.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Not always; but in the present instance the resemblance will hold good, even in this respect.

MISS FRANKLAND.

I fear you deceive yourself.

LADY SHREWDLY.

I believe I do not; but I will not be positive. You know Clermont better than I do.

MISS FRANKLAND.

I thought I knew him; but I was mistaken.

Re-enter CLERMONT *from the shrubbery, and bows to* MISS FRANKLAND *without speaking.*

LADY SHREWDLY.

You are grave, Mr. Clermont, and I trace

pondering lines upon your brow; may one know what engages your serious contemplation?

MISS FRANKLAND.

The composition, perhaps, of verses for the prettily-bound album of Lady Worrymore.

CLERMONT.

A book that will not have the honour of being opened by a lady who dislikes poetry.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Nay, a lady of such a character might read that book, I believe, with very little offence. But when its pages are enriched with your sonnet, Mr. Clermont, the case will no doubt be altered.

CLERMONT.

And, taking that alteration for granted, this same lady will then very willingly abstain entirely from reading it.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Most willingly; she will not even distrust your pretensions so much as to examine the fact.

CLERMONT.

I believe so. Cards of invitation, billets from a gay baronet, perhaps, or letters from country relations, afford reading enough for a prudent young lady who knows so well how to keep

imagination in subjection to plain common sense. — Ay, that, I think, is the phrase for the paramount virtue you now so decidedly profess — plain common sense.

LADY SHREWDLY.

A virtue, setting professions aside, of which there is mighty little in this garden at present, excepting some little scantlings that may, perhaps, belong to myself. — A truce with all this sparring! Cannot one person like poetry and another prose, as one likes moor-fowl and another mutton, without offence?

CLERMONT.

No, not even so, Lady Shrewdly, if the moor-fowl be cooked by one's neighbour, and the mutton by one's self.

MISS FRANKLAND.

And Mr. Clermont may add, that if the morsel of one's own cooking has been honoured by the approval of an epicurean palate, it were treason to dispute its superiority.

LADY SHREWDLY (*putting her hand playfully to the lips of* MISS FRANKLAND).

No more of this, foolish child! — Go into the house, I beseech you, and look for my pocket-book, which I have left upon some table or other.

MISS FRANKLAND.

I do your bidding willingly. [*Exit.*

LADY SHREWDLY.

Mr. Clermont, when young people, like yourself and Miss Frankland, quarrel together, I take no account of it; but if one can do the other any service, propose the business just as freely as if they were the best friends in the world.

CLERMONT.

Explain your meaning, Lady Shrewdly. Can I in any way be useful to Miss Frankland?

LADY SHREWDLY.

You can; and I engage your services on her behalf.

CLERMONT.

I thank you — I thank you most heartily.— But will she do so? Would not Sir John Crofton prove a more acceptable agent?—a more zealous one I defy him to be.

LADY SHREWDLY.

No, no; it is a service he would never perform: not faithfully, I'm sure, standing, as it does, opposed to his own worldly designs.

CLERMONT.

O tell me what it is, my dear Madam! I will do it most gladly.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Go to all the resorts of low foreigners about town, and find out, if possible, the German juggler called Manhaunslet.

CLERMONT.

The father of the boy Lady Worrymore admires so much ?

LADY SHREWDLY.

The same.

CLERMONT.

What can she possibly have to do with such a man as that ?

LADY SHREWDLY.

What very few indeed would think of doing.

CLERMONT.

How so ? — I beg pardon for questioning so closely.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Indeed, you need not : it will bear to be questioned. She is seeking to strip herself of fortune and all its advantages, for the sake of justice and affection.

CLERMONT.

Of justice and affection ?

LADY SHREWDLY.

In short, she has taken it into her head, from a strong resemblance, that that boy is the son of

her unfortunate cousin, who died abroad some years ago, and, consequently, the grandchild of her uncle.

CLERMONT.

Generous creature! I am sure her actions are poetry, let her taste and fancy be what they may.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Yes, somewhat too romantic for Sir John's present views; so that we cannot trust the business to him.

CLERMONT.

No, hang him! I'll do it myself: I'll set about it forthwith. There is not a gambling-house, spunging-house, nor night-cellar within the bills of mortality that shall be unsearched.

LADY SHREWDLY.

You take it up so eagerly that I cannot doubt your diligence. Good bye, for the present: I must return into the house, and release her from searching for what she will not find. [*Exit.*

CLERMONT.

To foster a quarrel with me so capriciously and pettishly at such a conjuncture! — I understand her now. — She is a noble creature; but surely she might have done it less offensively.

[*Exit by the garden.*

SCENE III.

The private Closet of LORD WORRYMORE.

Enter his Lordship, *with papers in his hand, followed by an* Amanuensis.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Sit down at this table, and begin your task; and take good care to copy correctly the periods, the pauses, and the notes of admiration. Eloquence is wonderfully assisted in the reading by those little auxiliaries.

AMANUENSIS.

I will, my Lord.

LORD WORRYMORE.

And when you come to any very striking expressions, be sure to draw a line under them — so, (*showing him how,*) that the reader may do them justice, with a correspondent emphasis and elevation of voice.

AMANUENSIS.

Certainly, my Lord: I shall mark all such passages as your Lordship may be pleased to point out.

LORD WORRYMORE.

I should like you to mark also some passages of your own selecting: for an unlearned person

of common capacity will be struck with real eloquence surprisingly. When the former Corn Bill was brought into the House, and I had prepared my speech, ——

Enter BLOUNT.

BLOUNT.

Your speech, my Lord?

LORD WORRYMORE.

Yes, Blount: I am just telling this young person here how surprisingly my own attorney was struck with some passages which I read to him from my first speech on the Corn Laws; and a man, too, who has no more taste or cultivation than a coalheaver.

BLOUNT.

I well believe it, my Lord. The want of both could never disqualify him from relishing the beauties of such a production.

LORD WORRYMORE.

You have read it, then?

BLOUNT.

I have heard of it. It was that effort of your genius, I understand, which helped to win the heart of Lady Worrymore.

LORD WORRYMORE (*sighing*).

Ay, it was even so: in those happier days

when her high-toned mind followed freely its own dictates; ere caprice and love of change had led it astray.

BLOUNT.

Never mind; we shall bring it back again to as high tones as it ever uttered, and all upon the right string, too.

LORD WORRYMORE.

And you think she will be charmed with this speech?

BLOUNT.

My life upon it, she will be charmed beyond measure.

LORD WORRYMORE (*with affected modesty*).

I think she will be reasonably pleased.

BLOUNT.

No, faith! that won't serve our purpose at all: she must be charmed to a folly.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Ha! ha! ha! thou art a cunning fellow, Blount; I'll get thee promoted in the navy for this. (*Going to the writing table, and overlooking the* Amanuensis, *who is busy writing.*) Let me see how far you have got.—Aha! within two words of the very passage. (*Mutters to himself as he looks at the papers, and making gestures of declamation, very pompously.*)

BLOUNT (*aside*).

What is the fool about? — (*Aloud.*) Some striking flowers of oratory, my Lord: one can see it by the fire of your eyes and the vehemence of your action. I am fortunate in witnessing the grace of your delivery: it is well for me to have a lesson.

LORD WORRYMORE.

You shall judge, my friend! (*Lifting the manuscript from the table, and putting himself in a dignified attitude as he reads.*) "That grain which, by the hands of our own ploughmen, whistling in concert with the early lark, hath been deposited in the maternal bosom of our soil; that grain which hath waved in the gentle breezes of summer and of autumn, and fructified under the salubrious temperature of our native climate——" (*looking to him for applause.*)

BLOUNT.

Very fine indeed! Such grain as that is too good for making quartern loaves of, — to be munched up by every dirty urchin that bawls about the streets.

LORD WORRYMORE (*chuckling with delight*).

No, no! my argument does not lean that way.

BLOUNT.

You do it injustice: it will lean any way.

LORD WORRYMORE.

I only meant to prove that the lords of the soil should be allowed to defend the produce of their soil from competition and depreciation.—And that passage pleases you?

BLOUNT.

Pleases me! if I say, *delights* me, will you doubt of my sincerity? No, my Lord; I am sure you will not.

LORD WORRYMORE (*with affected modesty*).

Why, I must frankly confess that I think it a tolerable specimen of parliamentary eloquence.—But here is something farther on, which has, perhaps, superior claims on your attention, if you will honour me with some portion of it.

BLOUNT.

With it all, my dear Lord: can it possibly be better employed?

LORD WORRYMORE (*spreading his right arm, and assuming dignity, as before*).

"I am free to confess, my Lords, that the fruits of the earth have been given by the bounty of Providence for the sustenance of man."

BLOUNT.

That, the noble lords will certainly assent to; and, so far, the speech must be effective.

LORD WORRYMORE.

But hear it out. — "The sustenance of man," — mark ye now; — "the pot of the labourer; the oven of the cottager; the board of the marriage-feast, with all the fair faces surrounding it; the christening, and the merry-making; and even the sorrowful repast of those, who in the graves of their forefathers have deposited their dead; — yes, I am free to confess, my Lords, that there, on such occasions, should the healthful produce of our native fields be found in abundance. But would you have the repasts of England's valiant sons and lovely daughters drawn from foreign climes? — from fields unlike to those in which they have joyfully beheld the green blade shoot, and the poppy wave its gay head in the sun? — from fields barren to them of all dear associations and sympathies which are the nurture of the mind? — I will not wrong noble Lords so much as to suppose it."

BLOUNT.

If they can allow, after that, one penny loaf of foreign flour to thicken the pottage of a drover, they deserve to be choked with it themselves.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Ha! ha! ha! it amuses me to see you take it up so heartily. Well, I love you the better for it; though you do express your thoughts in your own sailor-like fashion. I thought it would strike you. — And you must do it justice, my young

friend; you must read it with emphasis and all appropriate action.

BLOUNT.

Neither emphasis nor action shall be spared, depend upon it; but as to doing it justice, you know that is impossible.

LORD WORRYMORE.

O! you are too flattering — too partial.

BLOUNT.

But are you sure, my Lord, that Lady Worrymore has never heard any part of this speech before? — no morsel of it, dropping from your lips unguardedly?

LORD WORRYMORE.

No: I have been too much offended with her of late to repeat to her one word of it. She does not even know that I have prepared a speech on the subject.

BLOUNT.

A fortunate forbearance!

LORD WORRYMORE.

And I reckoned, too, that her surprise would be the greater after its success in the House; as no doubt it would, had the measure been brought forward at the time that was appointed for it.

BLOUNT.

Then all is safe. — There is a gentle knock at

the door. Permit me. (*Opens the door, and enter* LADY SHREWDLY, *with a box in her hand.*)

LADY SHREWDLY (*looking round her*).

In busy preparation, I see.—And I, too, have been busy, and have found my way up the back staircase without meeting any body.—How do you get on?

LORD WORRYMORE.

I assure your Ladyship we get on famously. I think our plot sure of success. None of the finer parts of the speech are lost upon this young man. He has a native taste, though uncultivated: he will do justice to them all.

LADY SHREWDLY.

With the help of this wig, and a proper solemnity. (*Taking a wig from the box, which she puts upon* BLOUNT'*s head.*) There; who but must admire the sapient countenance of the great orator Mr. O'Honikin?—And has Clermont's sonnet been exchanged for the more precious gem of his lordship?

BLOUNT.

I have taken care of that, and it is now in Lady Worrymore's own keeping, under promise that the sealed envelope is not to be opened till the reading hour.

LADY SHREWDLY.

I'm glad of it. Adieu, then, till we meet at

the place of trial, and, I trust, of triumph, my Lord. (*Going.*)

LORD WORRYMORE (*preventing her*).

Nay, you must stay just to hear him read one of his favourite passages.

LADY SHREWDLY.

I thank you very much; but I am in a particular hurry.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Nay, nay; but a short passage, and I'll read it myself.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Indeed, I am in a hurry.

LORD WORRYMORE.

You must hear it. I'll detain you but a few moments. (*Running her up to the wall, as she tries to make her escape.*)

LADY SHREWDLY.

Let me go, I beseech you: I hear Lady Worrymore coming.

[*Exit hastily, while he looks round in alarm.*

LORD WORRYMORE (*listening*).

I hear nobody coming.

BLOUNT.

It was but a trick to get away.

LORD WORRYMORE.

What a desperate haste she must be in! (*Going to the table, and seeing the* Amanuensis *at a loss.*) Write on, my friend: what's the matter?

AMANUENSIS.

There's something wrong here.

LORD WORRYMORE.

That's impossible.

AMANUENSIS.

There must be a page wanting.

LORD WORRYMORE (*examining the papers*).

Truly, so there is. I must have dropt it in the library. [*Exit into the library.*

BLOUNT (*aside, looking at the* Amanuensis).

Silly fellow, to mention such a discovery! It would have made as good sense without the page as with it.

LORD WORRYMORE (*calling behind the scenes, from the library*).

Bring light here: I can see nothing.

[*Exit* Amanuensis, *carrying a light, and* BLOUNT *following.*

SCENE IV.

A narrow Ante-room or Hall; Servants *seen crossing the Stage from opposite sides.*

FIRST SERVANT.

Have you been listening, Tim? You seem mightily diverted.

SECOND SERVANT.

I had no occasion to listen; for I contrived business for myself, as it were, and stole quietly into the room, and saw all the company, and the oration-man busy in his vocation: and hard work it is, I'll assure you.

FIRST SERVANT.

Hard work! it is only words out of his mouth, is it not? A country curate would think nothing on 't.

SECOND SERVANT.

Only words out of his mouth, say ye? Both legs and arms are at work, like any weaver busy on the treadles: and for making of mouths, and grinning and staring under the curls of that blouzing wig of his, it's unpossible for me to gi' you any notion on 't. I would not undertake to supply either lords or ladies wi' such a turbullion

of roaring, and thumping, and winnowing of arms, for a month's wages twice told. I've seen the stage doctor at Barth'lomew fair, but he is but a joke to it. Listen, man! you can hear him through the wall.

(BLOUNT's *voice heard without.*)

FIRST SERVANT (*listening*).

Faith, so I do!—And how does my Lady take it?

SECOND SERVANT.

Ay, she has nearly as hard work in admiring him, as he has with his eloquence, as they call it. Lord help her to a soberer way of commending folks, for her body's sake! She'll be in a fever by the evening.

FIRST SERVANT.

Never mind that; she's an able-bodied person enough, for all that she casts up her eyes, and smells at her bottle of salts so often.—But here comes Mr. Clermont's Ned.

Enter a Third Servant.

THIRD SERVANT.

Is my master here?

SECOND SERVANT.

Yes, but he came last of all the company: my Lady inquired for him twenty times over, before he appeared.

FIRST SERVANT.

What kept him so long, I wonder?

THIRD SERVANT.

It was more wonderful that he got here at all.

FIRST SERVANT.

How so?

THIRD SERVANT.

He has been in all the raggamuffin places in London, after a raggamuffin foreigner.

SECOND SERVANT.

And did he find him?

THIRD SERVANT.

No; it was all labour lost. But I have just discovered where he is certainly to be found; and if you would let me into the room for a moment, that I may whisper it in his ear, I should be greatly obliged to thee, Tim.

SECOND SERVANT.

Let ye into the room! Not till ye gi' me a good silver sixpence, I warrant ye.

THIRD SERVANT.

A silver sixpence, for speaking to my own master!

SECOND SERVANT.

Ay; and for seeing as good a show as any

body ever paid half a crown to gape at.—List! list! he's roaring again.

(BLOUNT's *voice heard as before.*)

THIRD SERVANT.

Well; I must speak to my master, be the cost what it may.

SECOND SERVANT.

Come along, then. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.

The grand Library: BLOUNT *is discovered standing on a platform, with a table before him and his MS. oration in his hand, surrounded by* LORD *and* LADY WORRYMORE, LADY SHREWDLY, MISS FRANKLAND, CLERMONT, *&c. &c., while a general murmur of applause is heard, as the scene opens.*

BLOUNT (*in a low voice, as if much exhausted*).

Pardon me for a moment. (*Takes a glass of water from the table and drinks it slowly.*)

LADY WORRYMORE (*running about from one person to another*).

LADY WORRYMORE.

Was there ever any thing so eloquent?—Is it not sublime?—And you love poetry, Lady

Tweedle; is it not poetical, too? A scholar like you, Mr. Clermont, must know how to appreciate its excellence.

SIR JOHN CROFTON.

His learning were of little value else. Those who have studied Demosthenes and Cicero will know what to think of this, pretty accurately.

LADY WORRYMORE.

I am delighted to hear you say so, Sir John. Demosthenes! Cicero! Oh, it makes my heart stir within me to hear those names pronounced! and those only who love their immortal works can do justice to the eloquence of Mr. O'Honikin.

LORD WORRYMORE (*going up to them, rubbing his hands and chuckling*).

And you like it, Lady Worrymore?—And you like it, Sir John?—Both very right: he's a clever fellow; both very right. What do you say, Mr. Clermont?

CLERMONT.

Every one is right to be pleased when he can.

LADY WORRYMORE.

What an observation, applied to the fervour of our admiration!

LORD WORRYMORE (*laying his hand soothingly on* CLERMONT'S *arm*).

Don't be so grave, my dear Sir: have patience

— have patience: your pretty sonnet will claim its own share of admiration presently. (*Going with great complacency from one person to another.*) I hope you like him? — I hope you like the speech. Very good; all very clever. At least, I am told so — it does not become me to speak.

LADY SHREWDLY (*aside, pulling his sleeve*).

Have a care: you'll discover all with that false modesty.

LORD WORRYMORE (*aside to* LADY SHREWDLY).

No, no! I'm cunning; I manage very well. (*Aloud.*) My Lady Worrymore, what did you think of that part about the Ploughman and the Lark, and the waving of the poppies? — very fine, was it not? No, no! I don't mean fine, neither; rather too fanciful.

LADY WORRYMORE.

You are a cold critic, my Lord. It requires a kindred spirit with the writer's to admire such exquisite imagery.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Very right; so it does, and you are akin to him, dear wife.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Hush! he has recovered, and is going to resume.

BLOUNT (*after having sipped the water and rubbed his forehead with an affected languor, takes up his paper and proceeds*).

"I have now, my Lords—I mean, my honourable friends—put you in possession of the views, ideas, and opinions of a humble individual, who has cogitated on this momentous subject with a sincere, a pure, a vivid, an ardent desire to enlighten the understandings, to rouse the proper feelings, of others; and I am free to confess, that I feel it to be my duty, humble individual as I am: I feel it to be my duty, and am free to confess, that it will give me the most unfeigned delight and satisfaction, if I have but roused one spirit to its duty — warmed one bosom with the feelings which ought to be felt on such a momentous subject — loosened from the trammels of prejudice one intelligent, enlightened, and intellectual compatriot." (*Bows affectedly, and lays down the paper, whilst a murmur of applause fills the room.*)

LADY WORRYMORE (*to* CLERMONT).

What a beautiful conclusion, Mr. Clermont! Can one say more of it than that it is worthy of the divine passages which preceded it?

CLERMONT.

That is exactly what I should say of it, and I am glad it will satisfy your Ladyship.

LADY WORRYMORE.

O that word satisfy! I'll speak no more to you. (*Running eagerly to* BLOUNT *as he descends from the platform.*) O my dear Mr. O'Honikin! you have laid us under eternal obligations. I shall now know what the ancient orators of Greece would have been, had they lived in our own times.

SIR JOHN CROFTON.

And spoken upon the corn laws.

LORD WORRYMORE (*with great pleasure and vivacity*).

And you are pleased, Sir John? And you are enchanted, Lady Worrymore?

LADY WORRYMORE.

Yes; rather more so, I believe, than your Lordship.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Very right; I find no fault with you for that, my Lady; it is right to be enchanted with a clever thing, let others feel as they may. Is it not, Miss Frankland? Is it not, Lady Tweedle? (*Clapping* BLOUNT'*s shoulder.*) O, my dear Orator! you have done your part to admiration: you have given such expression to my thoughts.

LADY WORRYMORE (*to* BLOUNT).

What does he say?

BLOUNT.

That I—I— his Lordship does me the honour to say that I have given expression to his thoughts; graciously insinuating, that the poor ideas I have just delivered are akin to those which he himself entertains.

LADY WORRYMORE (*contemptuously, and in a low voice to* BLOUNT).

Which are always akin to whatever he happens to hear last.

BLOUNT.

And must, in this bright metropolis, find a goodly clan of relations.

LADY WORRYMORE.

And, my dear Mr. O'Honikin! what alternations of humility and generous confidence! The humble individual, who feels it to be his duty to rouse to action, to warm with——How did it go?

BLOUNT.

O, dear Lady, you make me blush!—To rouse to duty—warm to feeling—loosen from the trammels of prejudice my enlightened, intelligent, and intellectual compatriots. All that a humble individual like myself could possibly hope to achieve.

LORD WORRYMORE.

And has he not achieved it? has he not, my love?

LADY WORRYMORE (*aside*).

What, is he here again!

LADY SHREWDLY (*aside to* LORD WORRYMORE).

Be quiet, my Lord, or you'll betray the whole.

LORD WORRYMORE (*aside to* LADY SHREWDLY).

Well, well! I'm as quiet as a mouse.

LADY SHREWDLY.

But you forget the sonnet, Lady Worrymore, in your admiration of the speech.

LADY WORRYMORE.

I beg your pardon, Mr. Clermont; I beg a thousand pardons.

CLERMONT.

One, Madam, is more than enough.

LADY WORRYMORE (*taking a packet from her reticule*).

This most prized and precious packet. (*Opening it and holding out a paper to* CLERMONT.) Pray, dear Sir, do you now occupy the seat of Mr. O'Honikin, and emparadise our souls with the effusions of your divine muse.

CLERMONT.

Pardon me, Madam; myself and my verses are utterly unworthy to occupy the place of such superlative predecessors.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Nay, nay; you will read them yourself; no one else would give them their proper expression.

CLERMONT.

Excuse me: excuse me.

BLOUNT.

And excuse me, also, for presuming to offer my husky voice for that service which Mr. Clermont too modestly declines.

LADY WORRYMORE.

How delightfully obliging! but I fear it will exhaust you too much.

LORD WORRYMORE (*eagerly*).

Not a bit, not a bit! to it, dear Orator, and give us the sonnet, too.

BLOUNT (*receiving the paper from* LADY WORRYMORE: *returns to the platform, and reads affectedly as before*).

SONNET TO A YOUNG LADY.

The pretty gadfly, sporting in the rays
Of Sol's bright beams, is heedless of the pain
The noble steed doth from its sting sustain.
On his arch'd neck and sleeky sides it plays,

Darting now here, now there, its pointed sting;
While he, impatient of the frequent smart,
Doth bound, and paw, and rear, and wince, and start,
And scours across the plain. — But nought doth bring
Relief to his sharp torment: — So do I,
Poor luckless wight! by Love's keen arrows gall'd,
From thee, my little pretty teazer-fly.
But, ah! in vain! there is in me no power
To shake thee off; nor art thou ever pall'd
With this thy cruel sport, in ball-room, bank, or bower.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Delightful, delightful! I expected to be charmed with your sonnet, Mr. Clermont, but this outdoes all expectation.

CLERMONT.

And all patience at the same time, Madam.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Nay, don't let the modesty of genius suppose that we could possibly think it tedious. How delightful the lady must have been to whom that sonnet was addressed! A young lady, as the title gives notice.

CLERMONT.

The younger the better, I'm sure, for receiving such verses.

LORD WORRYMORE.

What does he say? Does his modesty shrink from praise?

CLERMONT.

My Lord, I can suffer this no longer: so

much honour thrust upon me, to which I have no pretensions, is ——

LORD WORRYMORE (*aside to* CLERMONT).

Come this way, and receive a private word in your ear.

LADY SHREWDLY (*aside to* LORD WORRYMORE).

Let me speak to him, my Lord, and do you enjoy your secret triumph. (*Draws* CLERMONT *away to a corner where she continues speaking to him in dumb show.*)

LADY WORRYMORE.

Was such beautiful poetry, with such a modest poet, ever yet combined?

SIR JOHN CROFTON.

He blushed deeply, indeed: and, methinks, (*fixing his eyes on* MISS FRANKLAND) he has a fair friend here who sympathises with his modesty, if one may judge from the colour of her cheeks. Ah! when shall I receive such proofs of sympathy?

MISS FRANKLAND.

When you blush at all, Sir John. You can scarcely expect from your friends this token of sympathy till you give them an opportunity.

BLOUNT.

Yes, our poet blushed a little, I believe, as I

read his verses; he was scarcely aware of their excellence.

LORD WORRYMORE.

How should he; how should he? One makes but slight account of one's own. It is a pretty thing enough in its way; but you honour it too much, perhaps. He, he, he! (*Chuckling and rubbing his hands.*) Don't you think so, Lady Tweedle? Don't you think so, Miss Fussit? Don't you think so, my love?

LADY WORRYMORE (*impatiently*).

You tread on my flounces, my Lord. Honour such a poem too much? it is impossible! I'll have a gadfly painted on my fan, and worship it.

ALL THE LADIES (MISS FRANKLAND *excepted*).

So will I — so will we all.

BLOUNT.

And what more will you do, dear ladies, to honour your divine poet?

LADY WORRYMORE.

And our divine orator, too, Mr. O'Honikin.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Crown their busts with laurels, my Lady Worrymore, with your own fair hands.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Charming! that is the classical tribute which

my heart pants to bestow. I would not live an hour without doing it, if I had but their busts and a garland.

LORD WORRYMORE.

I'll find the busts this very evening, my love, if you'll find the laurels.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Thank you, my Lord! How amiable it is in you to be so ready in honouring the merit of others! Let it then be so arranged, and this evening in the garden, before sunset, the tribute shall be paid; to which solemnity (*curtseying around her*) I bid ye all.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Bravo, my dear wife! Done like a most courteous and graceful lady. He! he! he! I thought it would please you. Did you mark the last line of it, ending thus — "Ball-room, bank, and bower?" It cost the poet some trouble, no doubt, to find such alliteration as that.

BLOUNT.

Unless it came by the Muse's inspiration, which is a convenient help for any poet, and saves the frail bark of his fancy a plaguy course of tacking. But you say nothing of the beginning of the piece, which shows such richness of expression :

" The pretty gadfly, sporting in the rays
Of Sol's bright beams"—

steeping, as it were, the brightness of the sun in his own brightness. This is what may be called supererogation or opulence of language.

LADY WORRYMORE.

So it is: a most ingenious and judicious remark.

LORD WORRYMORE.

You are a clever fellow, O'Honikin.

SIR JOHN CROFTON.

As good a critic as an orator.

Enter a Servant, *announcing something in dumb show.*

LORD WORRYMORE.

Ay, there is some little refreshment, I suppose, in the next room. Pray do us the honour. (*Offering his arm to a lady.*) [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—COLONEL FRANKLAND's *House.*

Enter MISS FRANKLAND, *with a scarf or shawl on her shoulders, as if going out, meeting* BARBARA, *who enters by the opposite side.*

BARBARA.

Sir John Crofton is below, madam.

MISS FRANKLAND.

And have you not told him that I am going out?

BARBARA.

I did so, my dear lady; but what use is there in denying you to a gentleman who says he will return an hour hence, or an hour after that, or an hour after that again, should it be more convenient to you?

MISS FRANKLAND.

Does he request to be admitted so earnestly?

BARBARA.

Yes, indeed; and his requests are like the sails of a windmill, always returning.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Very likely, Barbara, when there is breeze enough to swell them.

BARBARA.

How so, madam?

MISS FRANKLAND.

You smile on him when he comes, perhaps, as if you would say, "My mistress is going out, but I know she will be pleased to see you, Sir John."

BARBARA.

Indeed, indeed, I did not, madam; and for any little presents he has given—I mean offered me, I scorn them as much as any body. But, I must needs own, madam, that I likes to see a genteel titled gentleman enter the house, who speaks to a poor servant cheerily, better than a grave stately Mr. Thingumy, who passes one as if one were the door-post.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Don't be so discomposed, Barbara; I beg pardon if my suspicions wrong you. Be this as it may, I believe you wish me well.

BARBARA.

Ay, that I do; I wish you well, and rich, and every thing that is good. And lady sounds better than mistress at any rate. I little thought, after serving you almost twenty years as dry-

nurse, school-nurse, and own maid, to be but the attendant of a plain gentlewoman at last.

MISS FRANKLAND (*laughing*).

For thy sake, then, I had better look out for a peer. However, since it must be, desire Sir John Crofton to come up stairs.

[*Exit* BARBARA.

It is an unpleasant moment, and I shrink from it, but the sooner it is over the better. Ay, and to settle the matter with a good grace for him, and without mortification to myself, it must be done quickly.

Enter SIR JOHN CROFTON.

SIR JOHN.

I thank you, Miss Frankland, for this condescension: five minutes of your company is precious when one cannot obtain more. But are you, indeed, obliged to go out?

MISS FRANKLAND.

I really have business which obliges me to go.

SIR JOHN.

And I have business (pardon me for calling it by that name) which requires you to stay. Will you honour me so far? (*Setting chairs and sitting down by her.*) Miss Frankland, there are situations which must plead a man's excuse

for abruptness — for precipitancy — for — for — in short, you understand me. I see by the glance of her eye, that Miss Frankland understands me to be in the most awkward situation that a man of feeling can be placed in.

MISS FRANKLAND.

And is it on that account the more likely to embarrass Sir John Crofton?

SIR JOHN.

That sarcastic question does me the greatest injustice. (*Laying his hand on his heart.*) Could you read the real sentiments which are here embosomed, you would know how ardent, how disinterested, how unalterable is that attachment to your cruel self which you seem so inclined to sport with.

MISS FRANKLAND.

In that case I should certainly know it, and regulate my gratitude accordingly.

SIR JOHN.

What frigid formal words may come from the fairest lips on the most interesting subjects! Gratitude! Oh, Miss Frankland! you know that it is something far more precious than gratitude which I would gladly earn from you by the whole affections of my heart, the whole devotion of my life and of my fortune.

MISS FRANKLAND.

And if I can give you no more, your suit of course is at an end, and free to be preferred in some more worthy and favourable quarter.

SIR JOHN.

O, do not say so! a more favourable, I painfully feel, may be easily found; a more worthy, never.

MISS FRANKLAND.

You set upon me an imaginary value.

SIR JOHN.

Call it not so: I repeat my words; and permit me to add, adorable girl, that where worth is, favour deserves to be waited for. Say, that in a fortnight hence, I may have some chance of subduing your reluctance.

MISS FRANKLAND (*shaking her head*).

I cannot.

SIR JOHN.

In a month, then?

MISS FRANKLAND (*as before*).

That would make no difference.

SIR JOHN.

Say two months, then — six months; ay, a whole year, if you can be so cruel as to withhold your consent to make me happy for so long a period.

MISS FRANKLAND.

That is a cruelty I shall never be guilty of.

SIR JOHN.

You delight, you transport me! on my knees I thank you, most bewitching of creatures!

MISS FRANKLAND.

Rise up, Sir John, and waste no thanks on so small an obligation; but hear me out. Withholding my consent is a cruelty, as you are pleased to call it, of which I shall never be guilty, since what will never be given, cannot be said to be withheld for any period.

SIR JOHN (*rising from his knees angrily*).

Upon my honour, Miss Frankland, you are a practised angler, a very practised angler, no doubt; but do not think to hook a trout with bait that suits a gudgeon.

MISS FRANKLAND.

You are angry, Sir John, and that admonishes me that I should be plain — that I should be honest.

SIR JOHN.

Ay, very honest, no doubt. (*Going hastily away, and returning.*) Nay, nay, nay! I am not angry; and you shall be as honest as you will, but kind at the same time.

MISS FRANKLAND.

As you understand the word *kind*, the two are incompatible.

SIR JOHN.

And how does Miss Frankland understand it, pray?

MISS FRANKLAND.

That to put a speedy end to all suspense, even by a flat refusal, is kind in every thing that regards the affections; if I am not too presumptuous in supposing the present proposal to be a case of that nature.

SIR JOHN.

Faith, it is at least one of an extraordinary nature, and may excuse all concerned with it from the common rules of ceremony and etiquette. (*Crossing the floor, then returning with a conceited smile.*) Pardon me, Miss Frankland; I feel myself still at liberty to watch for some more propitious moment.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Your patience will be tired out ere you find it; and so will the patience of my friend (*looking at her watch*), whom I promised to meet nearly half an hour ago.

(*Curtseying to* SIR JOHN, *who retires tardily, and lays his hand on his heart as he disappears.*)

MISS FRANKLAND (*alone*).

O self-conceit, self-conceit! how is the most downright person in the world, restrained by the common rules of society, to deal with thee? And if thou art the cause of perseverance, what shall we say of the high-lauded virtue of constancy?

Enter LADY SHREWDLY.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Is it possible, Fanny Frankland? I could not have believed it.

MISS FRANKLAND.

What is it that so thwarts your belief?

LADY SHREWDLY.

That you should encourage the addresses of Sir John Crofton, because Clermont for a season was cajoled by the affected ardour of Lady Worrymore. You might have seen very well that he was ashamed of his sonnet, and enjoyed not the praises she lavished on it.

MISS FRANKLAND.

And what puts it into your head that I have encouraged his addresses?

LADY SHREWDLY.

I met him just now on the stairs, smiling to himself very knowingly, and when I asked him,

with a significant look, how affairs prospered with him here, his answer was a nod of complacency, which wanted no words of explanation.

MISS FRANKLAND.

I have given him as decided a refusal as my knowledge of civil language could provide me with.

LADY SHREWDLY.

My poor simple creature! what dictionary in the world will furnish language sufficiently explicit to make a vain puppy understand that a woman will not have him? I should have understood his foolish smile better; pardon me, dear child.

MISS FRANKLAND.

But it does not signify; he will understand it distinctly enough to-morrow without a dictionary's help, for I am convinced that our little boy is the son of poor Emma.

LADY SHREWDLY.

We shall know that soon, for the German will be here to answer the questions of your uncle in a quarter of an hour. Clermont was indefatigable in finding him out.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Was he?

LADY SHREWDLY.

Yes, he was; and why do you say this so languidly?

MISS FRANKLAND.

To speak sincerely, then, I but half like his eagerness in helping to make me a poor woman.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Fie, fie, Fanny Frankland! your heart is an unfit place for unworthy thoughts to harbour in.

MISS FRANKLAND.

They sometimes harbour in better hearts than mine.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Ay, they are subtle imps, that for a moment will find shelter anywhere; but they are quickly turned adrift, and have rest and entertainment only with the unworthy.

MISS FRANKLAND.

I thank you! I thank you most gratefully, my dear Lady Shrewdly, for this friendly correction; I cast the base thought from my breast. I have given him cause by my petulance to suppose that I am not a fit companion for him, and therefore every thing particular between us is justly at an end. Why should I suppose that he has served me on this occasion from any but amiable motives?

LADY SHREWDLY.

Indeed you ought not to suppose it.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Alas, my dear friend!

LADY SHREWDLY.

Why that sigh?

MISS FRANKLAND.

Do you know that I am afraid of myself?

LADY SHREWDLY.

And why, dear child; of what are you afraid?

MISS FRANKLAND.

I fear that, when I am comparatively poor, I sha'n't bear the neglect of the world and my own insignificance as I ought.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Nay, that very fear is a voice from heaven for thy preservation.

MISS FRANKLAND.

May it prove so! I feel I shall be supported in doing what is right; and feeling what is right may at length follow (*raising her eyes to heaven*), if my humble sacrifice be accepted.

LADY SHREWDLY.

And it will be accepted, my own honest girl! But you were going out, I know, and I will not

detain you: pray permit me to get into the carriage with you, that I may enjoy your company the longer.

MISS FRANKLAND.

You are very kind.

[*Exeunt arm in arm.*

SCENE II.

COLONEL FRANKLAND'S *Apartment.*

Enter PATERSON *with books, which he lays upon a table, and then wheels his master's easy chair to its proper place.*

PATERSON (*alone*).

Ay, this here book of maps has had a long rest in the old bookcase; I wonder what campaigns and battles he has got into his head now. Howsomever, it signifies little, so as they can keep his notions of his *own constitution*, as he calls it, and ill-formed gout and affection of the kidneys, and the Lord knows what! out of it.

Enter COLONEL FRANKLAND, *leaning on his stick.*

COLONEL FRANKLAND (*after seating himself, and looking at his hand*).

I think this stiffness in my joints must be

somehow connected with this uneasy feeling in my back: dost thou not think so, Paterson? yet the doctor says it is not.

PATERSON.

And should not he know best, sir? Lord bless your honour! my joints are stiff, as most old men's are; and my back aches often enough, God wot! but I never think of asking the doctor about it. Take a musket in your hand and pace about the gallery a bit, and I'll warrant your back will get better.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Thou 'rt a rough physician, Paterson.

LAURIE.

But a kind one, your honour, and that is more than can be said of some that are smoother.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Well, well; there's no changing thy nature, and I must e'en receive such sympathy as thou hast to give.

Enter Servant.

SERVANT.

The German foreigner is come, Sir, that you wished to see. Miss Frankland desired me to tell you.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Let him come to me here.

SERVANT.

And the little master too, sir?

COLONEL FRANKLAND (*agitated*).

No, no! let him come by himself; Miss Frankland will look to the child. [*Exit* Servant. Hast thou any notion, Paterson, what this outlandish fellow has been sent for?

PATERSON.

I have a kind of notion, I know not how, about it. Does your honour wish me to leave the room?

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Stay where thou art; I would rather have thee by me.

Enter MANHAUNSLET.

(*To* MANHAUNSLET.) You are a foreigner, I understand, and have brought a little boy with you to this country.

MANHAUNSLET.

Yes, hon'rable sur.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Is he your own son?

MANHAUNSLET.

He be good as son to me.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

That is no direct answer. Tell me the honest

truth, and whatever it may be, I will reward thee for it. And if you say what is false, I am not such a dunderhead but I shall find it out.

PATERSON.

Ay; his honour will find you out, so you had better speak the plain truth at once.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

The boy, then, is not your own son; is he your relation?

MANHAUNSLET.

Do not know.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Whose son is he?

MANHAUNSLET.

Do not know.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Where was he born?

MANHAUNSLET.

Do not know.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

How did he fall into your hands? Answer me plainly; don't hesitate.

PATERSON.

Nay, your honour; he'll say "do not know" to that too. Just let him tell his story after his

own fashion, and pick the truth out of it the best way you can. If it does not hang together, you can question him afterwards.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

I believe thou art right, Paterson. Tell me your story your own way, my friend. I have a curiosity to know how you came by the child, and I will pay you handsomely for satisfying it. And you need not be afraid of my taking the boy from you, till I have made you willing to part with him.

MANHAUNSLET.

Der be eight years ago, dat I passed trou de small town in Bohemia, in de night. When in one moment de large inn house burst into flame, and somebody wid two long arms trowed de child out from window, which I did catch in my gaberdine.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

And did you not learn what strangers were in the inn, and to whom he belonged?

MANHAUNSLET.

One poor gentleman, who was taken ill in de house, and died of illness and of de burnings on dat night.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

What countryman was he?

MANHAUNSLET.

Do not know.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

What papers, clothes, or goods did he leave behind him?

MANHAUNSLET.

All turned to cinder.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

What clothes had the child upon him, when you caught him in your gaberdine?

MANHAUNSLET.

One littel shirt.

LAURIE.

Had it any letters marked upon it?

MANHAUNSLET.

No.

LAURIE.

Where is that shirt now?

MANHAUNSLET.

It lie wid many oder rags to manure de corn-fields of Bohemia.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

And this is all you have to tell us of the boy?

MANHAUNSLET.

Not all.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Tell me the rest, then, quickly.

MANHAUNSLET.

Dere be no better boy for de tight rope, and de tumbling, and de jugglery, in all de worl: and he never telled no lie — no, not at all.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Hang the tight rope and the jugglery! Thou hast given him a notable education, no doubt; and a fine varlet he will be to receive into any family. So you have nothing more to tell me about the child?

MANHAUNSLET.

Notting more.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

What a romantic visionary track that dear girl has pursued! Call her in, Paterson; I'll see the poor child now with more composure.

[*Exit* PATERSON.

He is profitable to you, I suppose?

MANHAUNSLET.

He earn money for me; he is my living.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

I understand you, friend, and have no wish to do you any wrong.

Enter MISS FRANKLAND, *leading* HUGHO, *and followed by* MRS. BROWN *and* PATERSON.

MISS FRANKLAND (*advancing to her uncle with* HUGHO).

See, my dear uncle.

COLONEL FRANKLAND (*starting from his seat*).

Very like; ay, very like, indeed. Look up, my pretty child; look in my face steadily.—Would I could certainly know who was thy mother!—(*Turns away from him, and then returns and looks at him again.*)—Be whose child thou may, thou art a creature worth cherishing. Give me thy hand. (*Takes his hand and examines it.*) The very form of her fingers and nails; they were particular. (*Staggers back and sinks again into his chair, quite overcome.*)

MISS FRANKLAND.

My dear uncle, bear up cheerily. You see I have brought you what was well worth the bringing.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Thou hast indeed, dear Fanny; and for thy sake, were the resemblance less, he shall live as a child in my family, and be taken from his present way of life.

MISS FRANKLAND.

I thank you, dear uncle.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

We have no reasonable proof of his parentage.

MISS FRANKLAND.

I know not what you have learnt from Mr. Manhaunslet; but if this statement from the Genoese ambassador, in answer to the queries of Clermont, agree with it, you will have something of evidence to rest on. (*Offering him a paper.*)

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

Read it thyself; I cannot — no, don't read it; tell me the substance of it; that will suffice.

MISS FRANKLAND.

It says that Madame Martoni became the mother of a boy a few weeks before her death, and that Martoni, with the child, left Italy the year after to go into Bohemia, but from that time was never heard of more.

COLONEL FRANKLAND (*catching* HUGHO *in his arms and kissing him*).

If thou art her boy — if thou art, indeed. — O, that I were assured of it!

MISS FRANKLAND.

Mrs. Brown, you said something about a gold heart which you took from his neck.

MRS. BROWN.

Yes, madam, I put it up when he was sick, for I thought Lady Worrymore would lay her hands upon it. — Here it is. (*Giving a locket to* MISS FRANKLAND, *who shows it to the* COLONEL).

MISS FRANKLAND.

Do you know it, Sir?

COLONEL FRANKLAND (*shaking his head*).

I do not. (*To* MANHAUNSLET.) Was it on the child when you first found him?

MANHAUNSLET.

It was rount his neck. It is ornament dat our women and oder countries' women do wear; de are sold in Italian and German fairs not greatly dear.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

It must be hollow; does it open?

MANHAUNSLET.

Not open.

PATERSON.

Let me look; perhaps it does. (*Turning it round.*) This little ornament may be a spring. (*Presses and opens it.*)

COLONEL FRANKLAND (*eagerly*).

Hast thou found any thing?

PATERSON.

A small bit of paper enclosing this lock of hair. There, your honour.

COLONEL FRANKLAND (*taking the paper from* PATERSON *and reading*).

"A lock of my father's hair." It is written in her own small hand, and this is the very lock which she cut from my head when —— Oh, oh! and she loved me to the last, though she wounded me so grievously! (*Embraces* HUGHO *again and again, then crosses the room hastily.*) Come to my room presently, Fanny, and bring the boy with thee. [*Exit.*

MANHAUNSLET.

Ha, Master Hugho! you be one gentleman now.

MRS. BROWN.

And right glad to leave you, I think.

HUGHO.

No, Dame Brown; he fed, he clothed me, and did beat me very seldom.

MRS. BROWN.

Except when the monkey and thee quarrelled, and then he always took part with that odious brute.

MISS FRANKLAND.

Say no more of this, good Mrs. Brown: let every thing unpleasant be forgotten. Colonel

Frankland will settle every thing to your satisfaction. (*To* PATERSON.) Lead them to the housekeeper's room, and take good care of them both.

[*As* PATERSON *is leading them away* HUGHO *runs to them, kisses* MRS. BROWN'*s hand, and gives his hand kindly to* MANHAUNSLET.]

HUGHO.

See you bote again: see you often, and glad of it.

MISS FRANKLAND.

That is right, Hugho. And now you must come with me, and be a good child to your old grandfather.

HUGHO.

And good boy to you always; to love you, and bide wid you, and do all your bidding. O! I will tumble, and juggle, and sing to you all day long, if you will. (*Wrapping himself fondly in the skirt of her gown, and clinging to her as they go off.*) [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

LORD WORRYMORE's *Garden. Two Busts, covered with linen, in the back-ground, and Company assembled, amongst whom are discovered* LORD WORRYMORE, LADY SHREWDLY, *&c. &c.*

LORD WORRYMORE (*to* Servants).

Move the busts this way; this is the best possible spot for them. [*Servants move the busts on their pedestals to the front of the Stage.*] She will be here in a moment. But where is Blount?

(*Retires amongst the crowd at the bottom of the Stage, whilst* LADY SHREWDLY *and* SIR JOHN CROFTON *come forward.*)

SIR JOHN.

So the fair lady has unseated herself with her own busy hands, and torn from her own brow all the grace and honours of an heiress?

LADY SHREWDLY.

It has indeed been her own doing.

SIR JOHN.

And a very foolish one, too: the age of romance has been long passed.

LADY SHREWDLY.

And will not be revived, I perceive, by Sir John Crofton.

SIR JOHN.

No, faith! the world, as it stands, is good enough for me.

LADY SHREWDLY.

I have the honour to agree with you entirely upon that point.

SIR JOHN.

Find out a puny urchin to disinherit herself! — I have made a very narrow — I mean, any one who has thought of offering to her, has had a narrow escape.

LADY SHREWDLY.

And if it be honourable, as well as narrow, you have reason to be pleased.

SIR JOHN.

Did she know of this brat and his birthrights this morning when I saw her?

LADY SHREWDLY.

She suspected it then; and the expression you wore on your face, as I passed you on the stair, of a favoured lover, showed me plainly enough that *you* did not.

SIR JOHN.

Nay, Lady Shrewdly; you mistook that expression.

LADY SHREWDLY.

I should have understood it to mean, then, that you were not favoured.

SIR JOHN.

When it is necessary that Lady Shrewdly should be informed of my private affairs, I shall have the honour to answer her queries.

LADY SHREWDLY.

And when such information can reflect any credit upon Sir John Crofton, I presume he will deem it necessary.

Enter BLOUNT.

Ha! Blount come at last: and not far behind comes Colonel Frankland and his niece.

Enter COLONEL FRANKLAND, *leaning on* CLERMONT *and* MISS FRANKLAND; *and* SIR JOHN CROFTON, *making them a distant bow, retires to the bottom of the Stage.*

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

I thank thee, Clermont: thy arm makes a good support for an old man.

CLERMONT.

And is one always at your service, my dear Sir.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

I thank thee, my good fellow. Thou art as kind as ever, and as simple, too, methinks; but how comes it that thy bust, as they tell me, is to be crowned with laurel for that sonnet of thine, which Fanny, to say the honest truth, has not praised much.

LORD WORRYMORE (*now advancing to the front, and overhearing them*).

How so? Not praised much. Ha! ha! ha! maiden prudery: just as it should be.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

It may be so; but she generally speaks as she thinks.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Not praised it much! What faults does she find with it?

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

There was something at the beginning, I forget what, which she said was very bad; and all that ball-room, bank, and bower business in the last line, she thinks is but wordy and cumbersome.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Poo! poo! poo! all maiden prudery, Colonel. She will not — she will not be pleased with the poetry of a young fellow.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

It may be so: and how comes he to have his bust made out so cleverly? To write rhymes one day, and be crowned for it the next, is marching quick-step time on the route of reputation.

Enter LADY WORRYMORE, *followed by her maid, carrying a basket with two laurel wreaths.*

But here comes the Lady Paramount, and Bestower of Reputation, who should be painted with a trumpet in her mouth, like my Lady Fame.

LORD WORRYMORE.

And so she ought. When her mind is unwarped by prejudice, nobody knows so well where praise is due.

LADY WORRYMORE (*looking round on the company, and bowing graciously*).

Most punctually assembled, and most welcome! I thank ye all, and beg your pardon for being so long in joining such friends; but, in truth, I could not be satisfied with the wreaths, which have been platted and unplatted, I don't know how often. And see there (*pointing to the basket*); they are not yet what I could wish. Laurels for this sublime circlet should have been fresher and brighter than our poor English climate

did ever produce; — the myrtles for the other culled in the valley of Vaucluse itself. Indeed they are not worthy of their high destination.

LORD WORRYMORE.

But from your fair hands, my Lady, is there either orator or poet who would not prize a garland of the simplest herbs?

BLOUNT.

Yes, saintfoin, buttercups, or any thing.

LADY WORRYMORE.

O, Mr. O'Honikin! could any one but yourself, undervaluing your own excellence, have talked of this touching solemnity! O dear! what shall I say? My heart pants within me! Tears are forcing their way into my eyes! (*Laying one hand on her breast affectedly, and the other on her eyes.*)

BLOUNT (*aside to* LADY SHREWDLY).

Forced work, indeed, I believe.

LORD WORRYMORE (*to* LADY SHREWDLY).

She is really touched. This is very amiable, my dear cousin.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Assuredly, my Lord, she has a true feeling of the honours belonging to genius.

LADY WORRYMORE.

You are right, my dear Lady Shrewdly: you understand me. O! did ever creature feel it so sensibly as I do! The very word *genius* sometimes makes me weep. (*Putting her handkerchief to her eyes affectedly.*)

LORD WORRYMORE.

Well, my dear wife! it is very affecting; it almost brings tears into my own eyes. (*Running from one person to another.*) Is it not so?— Is it not very affecting?— Could almost cry myself. — Don't you feel it?— But come, my dear love! you delay the ceremony.

LADY WORRYMORE.

It shall be delayed no longer. — Happy moment! sublime point of time! (*Taking a wreath from the basket.*) Thus, by an unworthy hand, is crowned the bust of personified Eloquence.

BLOUNT (*to* MISS FRANKLAND).

Unveil that bust, fair lady: nothing but the hand of beauty, I suppose, must take part in such ministry.

(MISS FRANKLAND *removes the veil from one of the busts, as* LADY WORRYMORE *raises the garland to crown it, but starts back, uttering a faint cry, on perceiving it to be the bust of her lord.*)

LADY WORRYMORE.

There is some mistake here. What a stupid blunder to bring this bust here, instead of the right one!

LORD WORRYMORE.

Ha! ha! ha! it is the right one, dear lady! it is the right one.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Do you think to persuade me, my Lord, that is not the very bust which was taken of yourself six months ago by Mr. Thumbit?

BLOUNT.

And is not the bust taken of his Lordship six months ago very fit to receive the honour earned by a speech written by him, probably about the same period?

LADY WORRYMORE.

Fie! fie! Mr. O'Honikin! to attempt to deceive me, and wrong yourself; to pluck the eagle's feathers from your own outstretched wings, to stick them in the pinions of a ——

BLOUNT.

Indeed, Madam, that very eloquent speech which I had the honour of reading to your Ladyship and this good company, is no more my own than this wig (*taking off the wig*), which I owe to the bounty of Lady Shrewdly.

LADY WORRYMORE (*staring at him*).

Frank Blount of Herefordshire?

BLOUNT.

The same, and your very humble servant.

LADY WORRYMORE.

You were always full of nonsense and tricks; but this is past endurance.

BLOUNT.

My dear Madam! can't you endure that the eloquence you have so ardently admired should belong to your own accomplished lord;—should be the produce, as one may say, of your own flesh and blood?

LORD WORRYMORE.

Yes, my dear life! you must pardon both him and me: for, had you known the speech to be of my composition, you would not have done it justice, I fear.—Don't pout so, my dear! (*in a soothing voice,*) nay, don't pout. I like you for admiring what is good, let the author of it be who he may. He! he! he! he!

BLOUNT.

And because the orator has received his due, must the poet go unhonoured? Mr. Clermont there is waiting to see his bust served with its garland also; and as there is no wig on his head, y our Ladyship cannot be deceived in that quarter.

LORD WORRYMORE.

And ladies, you know, my love, are reckoned better judges of poetry than speeches; though the present company, I believe, will reckon you rather a capricious, than a bad judge of either.

LADY WORRYMORE (*holding her head to one side, and assuming an air of diffidence*).

I feel, — what I ought to have acknowledged before, — that the tremour of my nerves has rendered me quite unfit, for the last twelve hours— O, much longer! — to judge of any thing. It is better for me to take care of my own fragile frame, than to concern myself with what is, perhaps, beyond the power of my poor capacity.

BLOUNT.

Why, your Ladyship's capacity never showed itself more undoubtedly than on the present interesting occasion. Had you praised the speech which I had the honour of reading, as the composition of Lord. Worrymore, the partiality of a wife might have been suspected.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Very true, he! he! he! Well urged, Blount.— And now, Mr. Clermont, come nearer to us, and witness the honour conferred on the writer of the sonnet. — My dear love! where is the other wreath?

BLOUNT (*following* LADY WORRYMORE, *as she turns away moodily*).

Nay, my Lady, don't let the writer of that beautiful sonnet be curtailed of his honours, because of my delinquency. It were an insult to the whole nine Muses to send poetry away uncrowned, when prose has been so nobly rewarded.

CLERMONT.

Pray, don't urge it. Her Ladyship, perhaps, thinks such poetry unworthy to be ranked with such prose; and we ought not to ——

LADY WORRYMORE.

By no means, Mr. Clermont; by no means. The merit of that beautiful sonnet cannot be affected in my estimation by any adventitious circumstances.

LORD WORRYMORE.

That 's right, Lady Worrymore; let every thing rest on its own merit, he! he! he! That is the golden rule to go by.

BLOUNT (*as before*).

Now do you unveil that bust, Miss Frankland. Ha! you retire behind backs, and won't do it.— I 'll do it myself, then, though I be but an un-

seemly minister in such elegancies. (*Gives* LADY WORRYMORE *the wreath, and then, as she is raising it, uncovers the other bust of her Lord.*) Put it on; put it on, my Lady. This is also the bust of the real poet who penned that delectable sonnet, and must not be defrauded of its due.

LADY WORRYMORE (*dashing the wreath in his face*).

I can bear such provoking insults no longer.

BLOUNT.

Devil take it! You have scratched my face with your twigs.

LADY WORRYMORE.

I wish they had all been thorn and bramble for your sake. (*Turns away indignantly.*)

LADY SHREWDLY (*following her soothingly*).

My dear Lady Worrymore! how can you take it so much to heart?

LADY WORRYMORE.

And you too, Madam, have been in the plot against me. A very becoming occupation for a neighbour and a friend!

LADY SHREWDLY.

My dear Ma'am! was it possible for us to

suppose that we prepared for you any other than an agreeable surprise? You won the heart and hand of your dear Lord by sensibility to his merit; and has that merit become less dear to you, when the glory derived from it is reflected upon yourself?

LORD WORRYMORE (*following* LADY SHREWDLY *and* LADY WORRYMORE).

Ay, very sensible; very well put, my good cousin. The glory is reflected on herself, and she casts it from her, like a spoilt child who likes every urchin's playthings better than his own. Come, come, dear life; you did think that sonnet a clever thing, and you *do* think it, I know you do.

LADY WORRYMORE.

Keep that knowledge to yourself, then, my Lord; it will but make us both very absurd.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Nay, nay, nay! (*Following her to the bottom of the stage, speaking to her in dumb show till they disappear amongst the company there.*)

CLERMONT (*advancing to* MISS FRANKLAND, *who is now returned to the front*).

You did not appear very sorry for my disappointment.

MISS FRANKLAND.

It cost me few tears, I confess. And you

take it composedly, too, considering how much enthusiastic admiration you have been deprived of at one stroke. But was there not really a sonnet of your writing sent to Lady Worrymore?

CLERMONT.

I blush to say there was. But Blount's waggery has proved my friend. He gave her that written by her own husband in its stead.

MISS FRANKLAND.

And what has become of it?

CLERMONT.

It is burnt, gentle friend, and shall disturb you no more.

MISS FRANKLAND.

And of what importance can it now be, whether I am disturbed by it or not?

CLERMONT.

Of more importance than ever; since your good opinion is more necessary to my happiness than it has ever been before. I know the generosity of your feelings, which has stirred up a quarrel between us, that I might on your change of circumstances feel myself a free man, without reproach or censure. But you will not find it so easy to get rid of me, dear Fanny, as of your fortune.

COLONEL FRANKLAND (*who has been listening behind backs*).

And who says she has got rid of her fortune?

CLERMONT.

I beg pardon, Colonel Frankland, for alluding to such matters; but you have now found an heir in your own descendant, and it is natural that it should be so.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

And I'll wager a crown, now, you both wish to have it so, that you may make a romantic match of it, and live on that bare estate on the mountains of Cumberland. But I hate romance; and unless you make up your mind to have her with the half of my moveable property as her dowry, you sha'n't have her at all.

CLERMONT.

My dear Sir, the boy is your grandchild.

COLONEL FRANKLAND.

And if he were so ten times over, shall I ever suffer a little imp like him to be dearer to me than this generous girl? (*Putting their hands together.*) Now, keep ye good friends, and quarrel no more. And—but a truce to good advice at present; for here are our two bubbles of vanity returned again, inflated still with air enough to keep them buoyant on the

whirlpool of vanity for months or years to come.

(LORD WORRYMORE *and his Lady, hand-in-hand, advancing from the bottom of the stage.*)

LORD WORRYMORE.

Give me joy, give me joy, my friends! Lady Worrymore has pardoned our frolic; and I believe there is nobody here, who will think less favourably of her taste and her judgment for the mistakes of this day.

LADY SHREWDLY.

Assuredly not. A wife who has taste and capacity enough to admire the talents and genius of her own husband, is most happily endowed.

LORD WORRYMORE.

Well said; he — he — he! very happily endowed. (*To* LADY WORRYMORE.) Don't you think so, my love?

LADY WORRYMORE (*gravely and demurely*).

I suppose she will be reckoned so.

[*Scene closes.*

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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